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April 10, 1998

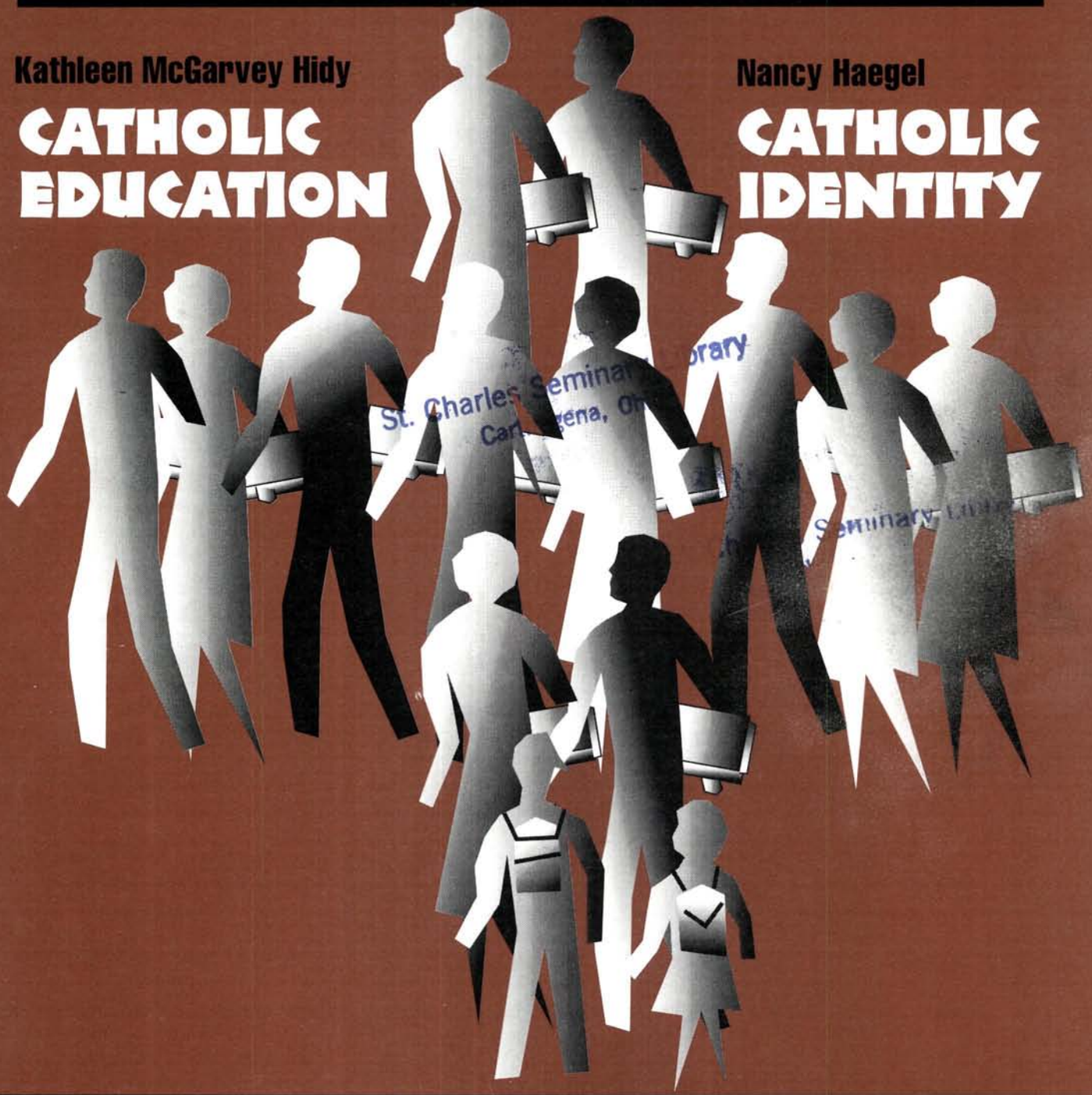
COMMONWEAL

Kathleen McGarvey Hidy

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Nancy Haegel

CATHOLIC IDENTITY



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THE VATICAN & THE HOLOCAUST

The Editors

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To the Editors

A neglected war

There are two wars in America's history that are usually ignored: the War of 1812 (1812–14) and the war with Mexico (1846–48). Thank you for David O'Rourke's excellent article [March 13] on the United States and Mexico.

ANN W. FERRIS
Hampton, W. Va.

Good point badly made

I agreed with the gist of the analysis by LaVonne Neff ["Powerful Men," March 13] on the arrogance that men in positions of power display toward women, but I found her style vulgar and her crude use of a baboon metaphor unworthy of a journal of *Commonweal*'s literary stature. This kind of rhetoric is more suited to a "rag," not the country's leading Catholic journal.

MARIE D. HOFF
Boise, Idaho

Mother Angelica: An original

Re: "Liturgical Confusion" [editorial, January 30]: The story about one great American Catholic woman's rise to power has simply been ignored by most of us. Mother Angelica is truly the first woman ever to successfully dominate the televangelist world. This gutsy nun has redefined dissent in her church as she assaults Vatican II and does not hesitate to take on a bishop. Even Rome is afraid to tackle this remarkable lady. Try to name anyone who might be able to match her job performance. Watching her sell God or books, you are seeing an extraordinary salesperson who knows God and her audience. One must admit that here is an original, and a great one.

R.C. WILSON
Stow, Ohio

From the editors: But would she be even more effective as the contemplative she set out to be?

'Unspotted by the world'

David J. DeLaura's interesting review of *The New Religious Humanists* [March 13] contained an allusion to "the impulse to live (as a poet once put it) 'unspotted by the world.'" Professor DeLaura equates this with "calls for a return to sexual purity." Actually, the "poet" in question is the author of the Letter of James, and the course of action recommended has more to do with aiding the oppressed than with sexual purity. The full quotation reads: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (New Revised Standard Version). Older translations use the phrase DeLaura remembers, "unspotted from the [or this] world." Nothing in the immediate context associates this particularly with sexual purity. In fact it strengthens the reviewer's major point, that in present-day moderately conservative religion, a revival is considered to be a withdrawal from the "contamination of the modern" and a consequent lack of "loving concern for others." I thought DeLaura might be interested in how appropriate his allusion turned out to be.

DONALD KRAUS
New York, N.Y.

The writer is executive editor for Bibles at Oxford University Press.

Questions on Iraq

Your editorial of December 5, 1997, ["The Least-Bad Solution] rightly stated that "there are no good answers to the problem posed by Saddam." As you declared in a later editorial ["A Fragile Fix," March 13, 1998], "there are moral limits to what the U.S. should do." Both editorials imply, however, that what progress has been made in this situation came about because of credible U.S. threats to bomb targets in Iraq unless United Nations inspectors were given free access to all sites they wish to visit.

This stance raises many questions for me. You admit that U.S. bombing is "unlikely to destroy much, if any, of the regime's biological and chemical capability"; yet isn't that the very purpose of our threats? Isn't it true that no nation should go to war against another without a reasonable hope of success? And what would be accomplished besides once more damaging an already pitiful social infrastructure of a hard-pressed people? You mention that it would weaken "Iraq's conventional military power." The Gulf War coalition did that a few years ago, and here it is again. If the weapons of mass destruction aren't affected, what's the point?

Despite claims to the contrary, we cannot pinpoint most of our bombs. Can we honestly call the killing of civilians—the aged, women, children—"collateral damage"? It seems to me about as "collateral" as the bombing deaths in Dresden and Tokyo more than fifty years ago. Can we now pretend that this is moral or necessary? Do statements from the Vatican and the bishops on Iraq have any validity for us when our forces are poised to strike unilaterally if Saddam reneges on his accord with the UN?

You mention the threat "presented to the stability of the entire region" by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. What is that "entire region" willing to do about it? Do those peoples whom we seem to think are threatened believe there should be an armed assault on Iraq? If so, where are they and why are we there practically all alone? Are we going to start a war whenever anyone threatens to use such weapons, or whenever a UN accord is broken? What did we do when Iraq used them on Iran? What if China so threatened Burma? Are

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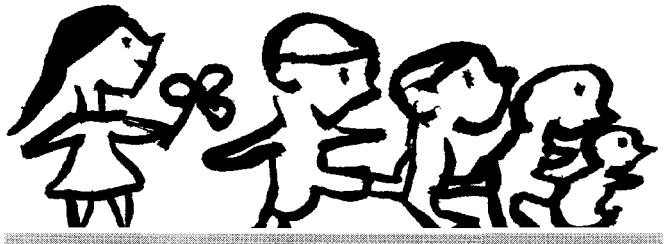

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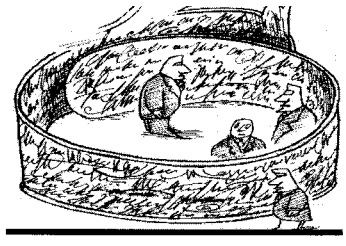

Alive, on tape
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we really being honest here?

ANDREW GALLIGAN
Tracy, Calif.

Take a stand

The March 13 editorial, "The Fragile Fix," was an attempt at a balanced analysis of a dangerously complex issue. As I studied it, however, it seemed to me that *Commonweal* had nothing to say to its readers and U.S. policy makers, other than "do good and avoid evil." That may make irrefutable philosophical sense, but such advocacy hardly evaluates war "with a whole new attitude" as called for by the Vatican II document *Gaudium et spes* and the American bishops' pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace."

The fact is that the one scenario of action the United States considered in the crisis, had "diplomacy" failed, was bombing by Navy cruise missiles and bombardment by the Air Force. Though the Pentagon assures us that its bombs are 90 percent smarter than they were seven years ago, they are still not smart enough to distinguish between a combatant and a civilian, which makes their use *ipso facto* unjust. *Commonweal* was remiss in not mentioning this in its last paragraph. "There are moral limits to what the U.S. should do," it says, but fails to come up with one specific moral limit for our enlightenment.

There is no doubt where *Commonweal*'s sympathies lie. They stress, ultimately, that Saddam Hussein is responsible for the whole present mess. The United States is only the unhappy and reluctant player in what *Commonweal* refers to as this "high-stakes poker game." Space does not permit a lengthy discussion of that thesis. Suffice it to repeat what our mothers often told us as children: "Two wrongs don't make a right."

PAUL FERRIS
Annapolis, Md.

The burdens of office

I picked up your February 27 issue in my parish library, and noted the editorial ["Free Riders"] describing Iraq's president as a ruthless dictator in control of weapons of mass destruction. True, but this calls for some context. If Saddam Hussein is a mass murderer, were not also Nixon, Johnson, Truman, and Roosevelt, who as commanders-in-chief presided over mass bombings of civilians? Have not other presidents threatened mass murder on a world-threatening scale? Of course, their actual or potential victims were not Americans, so consider Lincoln, a truly great man who nevertheless presided over the savaging of portions of our own South. Of course our presidents stand apart from Saddam in many respects, but in terms of mass killings of civilians, where's the difference? Anyone with a conscience must acknowledge that to run a substantial, activist state, one must be ready to commit murder on a massive scale.

DAVID BELLEFEUILLE-RICE
Olympia, Wash.

Critics vs. creators

In his comments on "liturgical horrors" [Correspondence, March 13], Philip E. Devine fails to mention whether he has been involved in his parish liturgy committee. The complaints of keen observers are good fodder for committee discussions. Those who worry about the future of worship might heed the call to help shape that future.

Liturgies are actions of the people in a given community, subject to all the usual human frailties. If we "shop" the diocesan smorgasbord of liturgies as consumers, evaluating them with "stars" like restaurant critics, we are far more likely to find fault than if we are full participants.

A review of the relevant history would demonstrate how, ever since Vatican II, liturgy has become more reflective of the patterns of the early church. The preconciliar liturgies, which dominated youth for many of us, had their origins in thirteenth-century Europe, and were decidedly nonparticipatory. We just happen to be living during a period of the greatest liturgical change in centuries. I recommend that Mr. Devine stop traveling from church to church, become actively involved in the liturgies in one parish, and be a "cook" rather than a "critic."

BARBARA ZAPSZALKA
Evanston, Ill.

Julian's message(s)

Frederick Bauerschmidt's "Will Everything Really Be OK?" [February 27] presents Julian of Norwich's comforting message as a disturbing call to share in the compassion of the crucified.

Julian's *Showings* does center on the image of the crucified, and Bauerschmidt's precise article introduces many to this aspect of Julian. Couched as it is in the rejection of "therapeutic" theologies, the article omits an aspect of Julian that readers would profit from. True, the icon of Jesus' passion is always before her, but so is the trust that we are linked "substantially" to the Godhead. Our sins thus have "no substance" (sin is nothing) because in the Augustinian sense they do not come from the God who creates. (All that is good, God creates, all that is evil, God suffers.) Sin is a lack or "nothing" because God "suffers" it rather than creating it.

The sense that "all is well" is rooted in the hopeful belief that all of us are deeply grounded (substantially) in the Trinitarian love. Such love is for Julian the ultimate meaning of our Lord's life (love was his meaning).

Julian transforms the *passio domini* motif of her time and she knows that her confidence goes far beyond what was permitted to her by the church.

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Misremembered

Eleven years in the writing, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," released last month by the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, will not and should not satisfy those on any side of the tortuous debate about the church's responsibility for anti-Semitism and possible complicity in the Nazi extermination of 6 million Jews. Although the sincerity of the statement's desire for genuine reconciliation between Christians and Jews cannot be second-guessed, the document as a whole is a grievous disappointment.

Most notably, some Jewish leaders have expressed sharp exception to, and even anger at, the Vatican's defense of Pius XII's failure to condemn Nazi atrocities in explicit terms. That reaction is understandable, although in fairness to the Vatican it should be said that Pius's alleged moral insensibility is not as self-evident as many—thanks largely to the distortions of Rolf Hochhuth's 1963 play, *The Deputy*—assume. Similarly, the pope's power "To Save Jews From Nazis" (as a recent *New York Times* headline put it) continues to be much exaggerated, even as the church's actual efforts to help hundreds of thousands of Jews are too easily dismissed. Nonetheless, calls for the opening of the Vatican's diplomatic archives to independent scholars should be heeded. Although it is not likely that Pius's moral culpability will be greatly clarified in the process, there is no chance that Pius will be dealt with fairly until all relevant documents are made public.

Other Jewish spokespersons have commended the Vatican statement for its unequivocal condemnation of anti-Semitism, and of past Christian persecution and violence against Jews. The document's embrace of the religious heritage and aspirations shared by Jews and Catholics is another reason for commendation. For many involved in the ongoing Catholic-Jewish dialogue, "We Remember" is rightly seen as an incremental step in a long journey, in this regard resembling *Nostra aetate* (1965), Vatican II's groundbreaking repudiation of the idea of collective Jewish guilt for Christ's death and affirmation of God's continuing covenant with the Jews. No one familiar with these issues can expect two thousand years of misunderstanding and worse to be set straight in a few decades.

Or without missteps along the way. In that regard, certain aspects of "We Remember" will need revising. Most unsatisfactory is the statement's refusal to attribute any fault or error for anti-Semitism to the church itself. "Erroneous and unjust interpretations of the New Testament regarding the Jewish people," Christian teachings that engendered "feelings of hostility," are acknowledged. But "the church as such," according to the Vatican, was never responsible. "The Catholic church desires to express her deep sorrow for the failures of her sons and daughters in every age," but never, it seems, does the church as a responsible entity have anything to repent for.

Catholics familiar with the traditional theological distinction that places the "church as such" over and above its fallible human members will understand how this kind of language is being used. The tradition holds that any suggestion of error on the part of Christ's mystical body is a theological oxymoron. But that very subtle distinction, expressing as it does a valid understanding of the church's unique

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access to religious truth, will certainly be lost on most readers of "We Remember." More likely, this assertion of the church's metaphysical reliability will be read, with reason, as the worst kind of this-worldly moral evasion. If over the course of centuries anti-Semitism was rarely if ever condemned but rather ignored, tolerated, even encouraged; if it infected not only the laity but priests and bishops; if church councils promulgated laws segregating and discriminating against Jews; if until very recent times anti-Semitism was given vivid expression in the Good Friday liturgy (the "perfidious Jews") and in religious art; and if this led to pogroms, to the terrors of the Inquisition—if, in short, anti-Semitism suffused much of Catholic culture for nineteen centuries, it is hard to see how "the church as such" can be held guiltless.

However one wants to understand the relationship between the mystical and the visible elements of the church, the incontrovertible historical record attests to the fact that "the church," and not just its members, taught erroneously, even perniciously, about Judaism and the Jews. If the Vatican statement means only that no pope or ecumenical council or curial body ever elevated anti-Semitism to the level of formal doctrine, that is not so large a claim and will not, in the eyes of most people of any faith or none, absolve "the church as such" of responsibility for policies, attitudes, and actions that taught as clearly as any encyclical.

Sad to say, "We Remember" is also tendentious and unpersuasive in its analysis of the nature of Nazi anti-Semitism and its relationship to what the document calls historic Christian anti-Judaism. Nazi racial anti-Semitism is attributed to "a false and exacerbated nationalism....essentially more sociological and political than religious." The document insists that the Holocaust had "its roots outside of Christianity" as the "work of a thoroughly modern neo-pagan regime."

To be sure, there are important distinctions to be made between Christian anti-Semitism and Nazi race hatred. The Vatican is right to remind the world that the church condemned the "idolatry of race and of the state." Although it proved to be a woefully ineffective obstacle to the Nazis, and millions of Catholics rallied to the Nazi cause, the Catholic church did not in any sense perpetrate the Holocaust. However, to argue that there was no connection between nearly 2,000 years of church-inspired anti-Semitism and the Nazi assault on European Jewry is utterly fallacious and offensive. Similarly, for "We Remember" to rehearse the political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and not acknowledge how the church's opposition to liberalism and democracy weakened the forces best able to deter fascism is equally disingenuous.

Nazi totalitarianism was, as the document argues, an unprecedented modern horror whose unique evil was difficult for all but the most prescient to grasp at first. But Nazism did not spring full grown from the atheistic brow of the modern world. It had obvious roots in Europe's near and ancient Christian past.

How the church can repent or correct the manifest errors of its past if it cannot honestly admit to any errors at all is, to say the least, something of a problem. This is brought home again when "We Remember" calls Western democracies to account for their failure to give refuge to Jews seeking asylum from the Nazis. That failure to act placed a "heavy burden of conscience on the authorities in question," judges the Vatican. Fair enough. But is no similar burden to be placed on the shoulders of church authorities who failed to act in their own sphere?

Various contemporary challenges to Catholic teaching seem to make the appeal to church inerrancy an increasing temptation on the part of the Vatican. But as "We Remember" exemplifies, the doctrine of inerrancy errantly applied is no real help to authority in the end.

NOTEBOOK

'SIMPLY CATHOLICISM'

Please explain

At a recent meeting of the National Center for the Laity in Chicago, Archbishop Francis George presided at a Saturday-evening liturgy. It was a prayerful and impressive Mass at Old Saint Patrick's on West Adams Street. The newly renovated church glowed with its refurbished Celtic borders and symbols—a bit like being inside the Book of Kells. Toward the end of his homily, Archbishop George (whose elevation to cardinal was announced on the following day, January 18) said that liberal Catholicism was exhausted, that conservative Catholicism was sectarian, and that, in any case, there was only one Catholicism.

Well, he said something like that, but darn, I didn't have my tape recorder! I didn't even have pen and paper with me. Some journalist, she. But I did have a chance afterward to ask Archbishop George what he meant, and he started to tell me. Unfortunately, there wasn't enough time; our conversation ended amicably but unsatisfyingly. Subsequently, at my request, he sent a copy of his notes, averring that although "I don't relish getting into a national debate at this time, ... I have to take responsibility for what I said."

This is the quote he sent from his homily:

"We are at a turning point in the life of the church in this country. Liberal Catholicism is an exhausted project. Essentially a critique, even a necessary critique at one point in our history, it is now parasitical on a substance that no longer exists. It has shown itself unable to pass on the faith in its integrity and inadequate, therefore, in fostering the joyful self-surrender called for in Christian marriage, in consecrated life, in ordained priesthood. It no longer gives us life.

"The answer, however, it not to be found in a type of conservative Catholicism obsessed with particular practices and so sectarian in its outlook that it cannot serve as a sign of unity of all peoples in Christ.

"The answer is simply Catholicism, in all its fullness and depth, a faith able to distinguish itself from any culture and yet able to

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engage and transform them all, a faith joyful in all the gifts Christ wants to give us and open to the whole world he died to save. The Catholic faith shapes a church with a lot of room for differences in pastoral approach, for discussion and debate, for initiatives as various as the peoples whom God loves. But, more profoundly, the faith shapes a church which knows her Lord and knows her own identity, a church able to distinguish between what fits into the tradition that unites her to Christ and what is a false start or a distorting thesis, a church united here and now because she is always one with the church throughout the ages and with the saints in heaven."

Whether or not Cardinal George is inclined to continue the conversation, those three paragraphs warrant the attention of those who sense that the Catholic church in the United States is, indeed, at a turning point. If that is the case, is "simply Catholicism" the trajectory toward which the church is turning? Is liberal Catholicism an exhausted project *in toto*? If not, what is exhausted and what remains vital? If one "type" of conservative Catholicism cannot be a sign of unity, is another type implied? If so, how should it be defined? And turning to Cardinal George's last paragraph: One hears faint echoes of De Lubac's *The Splendor of the Church*. But in looking at the church in which we actually live, I cannot help but also think of De Lubac's likening the church to "a ship of unruly passengers who always seem to be on the brink of wrecking it." Presumably Cardinal George would not disagree.

However, is the answer to this state of affairs singular—"simply Catholicism"? Or is Catholicism multifaceted, liberal and conservative being but two of many responses to living in this church in this culture at this time in history? Here are some other adjectives often found before Catholicism: charismatic, devotional, intellectual, Hispanic, Irish, Chicago, Boston, lukewarm, intense, traditionalist , and so on. Please note: these are not separate, plural entities, not Catholicisms; they are expressions of the same faith. They are expressions integral to the experience and the practice of real members of the actual church living and working in the contexts of different cultures, here and now. Even the most cursory study points to equivalent phenomena from the earliest days of the church. Agreed, all such expressions can only be partial, always needing to be tested by the whole church and corrected, if necessary, by tradition, by Scripture, by episcopal and papal scrutiny and judgment. It is, in fact, hard to imagine a *catholic* church without some degree of diversity and pluriformity.

What then does Cardinal George mean by "simply Catholicism"? Does he mean an eternal, a conceptual and reified Catholicism, sailing above the incarnational, the embeddedness of Catholicism in time and place? Does he identify this Catholicism largely with the magisterium and with the teaching authority of pope and bishops? With a specific approach to worship, to education, to spirituality, to social action? Is it congruent with the centralization of church authority in the Vatican curia? Is there anything else?

Perhaps those questions are a place to continue the conversation.

I don't want to end without a comment on Cardinal George's brief characterization of "liberal Catholicism." It was a "necessary critique," as he says—offering an unusual if not unprecedented episcopal concession in saying so. But it was and is more than that. In particular, through proposing a new understanding about the meaning of human freedom, liberalism has challenged Catholicism to reexamine certain of its hermetically contained ideas about the person, about conscience, about the relation of the person to the state, and about relations between church and state. That is not simply an achievement of the past; it is now part of the way Catholicism understands itself. In short, liberalism has taught Catholicism that belief cannot be compelled and that pluralism has its place, even in the church.

How will "simply Catholicism" accommodate what the church has learned from liberalism?

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

THE FEMINIST POPE

But who does the dishes?

Io sono il Papa feminista, "I am the feminist pope," said John Paul II with a twinkle in his eye. When everyone in the audience room laughed, he repeated the statement. After this merry addendum to his prepared remarks, the pope began his slow progress back to his study, smiling his greetings, patting and being patted; he stopped to have his ring kissed, his picture taken, and tenderly blessed a retarded child.

Although I hung back out of shyness, the rest of our group of participants in a Vatican-sponsored conference on women's health surged to get as close as possible to this stooped, frail figure in his dazzling white cassock. He looked and sounded so weak that I began to doubt whether he would make it through our audience, much less last long enough to take part in his projected millennium celebrations. No, said other observers, however much pain he appears to be in, he's too strong-willed to die; whatever his disease (Parkinson's?), it is stabilized enough for him to keep going.

I saw the pope twice during our week's visit inside Vatican City and came away with questions. What is the Petrine ministry all about? Why does John Paul consider himself a feminist? While the pope appears to be a prisoner of the Vatican routine, he is at least a prisoner of love. A big part of the pope's

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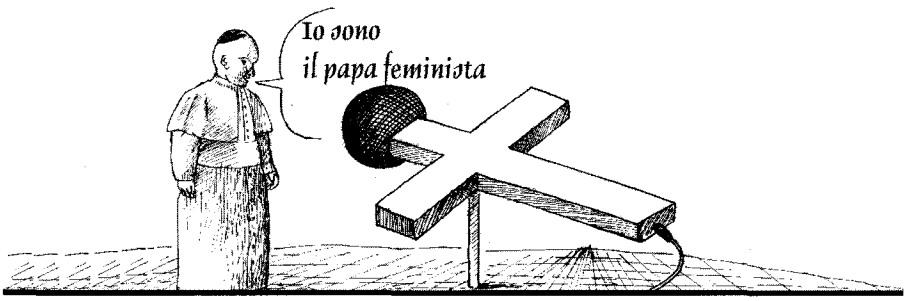

job (incredibly boring and tedious?) is patiently and graciously receiving endless expressions of affection—cheers, clapping—and in the large public audiences, tributes of band music, chants, flowers, banner waving, singing, and effusive long-winded greetings in many languages. Insight: The pope is not so much like a severe Holy Father, or even a guru Grandfather, but more like a beaming baby receiving lots of joyful adoration at a family reunion. No matter how serious the remarks he reads from the papers he's handed by aides, it's Christmas-carnival time.

Another glimpse of high festival appeared on the Sunday at the end of our conference, the feast of Saint Peter's Chair. Wandering into the glorious nave of Saint Peter's, lo, what to my wondering eyes should appear but the blossoming of the stark severe statue of Saint Peter, he of the bronze foot worn shiny from kisses. But today the dark statue was bedecked with a towering mitre, newly clothed in an embroidered robe, diamond necklaces, and finger rings of precious jewels. A dazzling grown-up Infant of Prague, by gum.

While taking all this in, I became aware of a large group of cardinals and attendants approaching with incense and with candles held high; they were wending their way from a Mass at the high altar to process down the steps into the crypt of Saint Peter's tomb. There they paused for a moment and then marched up again to Bernini's magnificent altar of Saint Peter's Chair, which but once a year is fully emblazoned with hundreds of candles. Up, up and away went the flickering lights, reaching toward the stained glass dove of the Holy Spirit, brooding over the scene "with ah! bright wings."

So this is what being a *Roman* Catholic is all about, thought I. Excessive, extravagant, gorgeous—the whole sacramental shebang. Why should I keep worrying my little Puritan head about the reactions of ascetic followers of Jesus Christ to all of this luxury? When one contemplates the full implications of the outrageousness of God's gifts of creation and redemption, these ritual responses seem fitting. Why blame Michelangelo, or Bernini and baroque company for their enthusiasms? Relax. Saint Peter's is still operating as a place of constant devotion; in one afternoon I, stumbling upon a beautiful Benediction service in a side chapel, turned another corner and took advantage of an English-language confessional, and, upon emerging, found I was just in time for the regular five o'clock Mass at the main altar, tactfully cordoned off from the swarms of tourists who do not choose to pray. All roads lead to Rome. And back.

Back, for me as an American feminist, had little to do with the wealth or ritual but with the pervasiveness of an entrenched male clericalism. In our guesthouse of Saint Martha inside the Vatican walls, cheerful nuns cooked, served, and cleaned the rooms while high-ranking male clerics attended important meetings and consistories. I even saw Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger emerging from an international theological commission session. Were they reinstating dissident theologians, like Tissa Balasuriya, or going after new cases of dissent? In such a rarefied, deferential atmosphere, it's surely harder to take account of church reformers' demands for due process and fair representation for the rights of the faithful *vis-à-vis* authority.

In the midst of this masculine hierarchical bastion, what should we make of the pope's claim to be a feminist? Well, someone in the Vatican had initiated and approved the idea of having a conference dedicated to women's health, and went to the expense of having American women and men come to Rome. Everyone at the conference was presented with a copy of John Paul II's "Letter to Women." Reading this document again convinces me that the pope has a sincere and deeply felt concern for women. The pope apologizes to women for past wrongs done them within the church; he refers to the way Jesus transcended his culture and "treated women with openness, respect, acceptance, and tenderness." This letter, like other of the pope's writings, vigorously champions women's equal dignity, and best of all, voices admiration for those women who courageously engaged in "fighting for their basic social, economic, and political rights...when this was considered extremely inappropriate, the sign of a lack of femininity, a manifestation of exhibitionism, and even a sin!" Yes, yes.

Other good words can be found in this document to warm feminist hearts. But then, alas, we come to the great stumbling block from my point of view. The pope over and over asserts the importance of the difference and complementarity of men and women's natures. He emphasizes "the genius of women" (whatever that means), which ensures that in "the sacramental economy, that is, the economy of signs," women cannot be ordained. There exists, he says, a symbolic complementarity of men and women which gives the church a "Marian principle" and an "Apostolic-Petrine principle." Christ "entrusted only to men the task of being an 'icon' of his countenance as 'shepherd' and 'bridegroom' of the church through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood."

So there we have it, the icon argument again. Another crucial struggle shapes up over the meaning of symbols, icons, and signs. I don't have space here to dive into these deep waters of division. Another time. At this point I am just going to spread the good news. While in Rome, accompanied by many witnesses, I heard the pope say that he is "*Papa feminista*." Pass it on. □

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E.J. DIONNE, Jr.

CLINTON'S DAY OF RECKONING

Now, not later

So when does it end? Will we spend the next twenty-two months talking about President Bill Clinton's sex life? True, it's not just about sex. It's about character and, perhaps, obstruction of justice, lying, and sexual harassment.

Yes, Kathleen Willey made a powerful presentation against the president. She appeared credible enough that it was hard for Anita Hill's defenders not to come forward on Willey's behalf. Some of them—notably Hill herself and Patricia Ireland of the National Organization for Women—did.

And it's difficult not to be upset with the president. Since he knew that his behavior with women was destined to be an issue, why didn't he go out of his way to avoid situations that might even appear to be compromising? If you believe a vast right-wing conspiracy is out to get you, you watch your back, and you behave.

Still, there is a core problem with this story, and it's one of the reasons why the public still has not turned on Clinton. In this controversy, it's possible to believe that everyone is right.

You can be fairly certain that the president did things he shouldn't have, and also know that some of his enemies will do anything to bring him down, no matter what he did. You can believe that Ken Starr has grounds for suspecting a large Clinton cover-up, ranging from Webb Hubbell to Monica Lewinsky, and also surmise that Starr, smarting from attacks on himself and his office, will do whatever it takes to get the president.

You can believe there are women with legitimate complaints against the president, and also doubt some things his accusers have said. You can believe the Clinton camp will trash whomever they have to for the sake of survival, and that Clinton shaves the truth when he has to, andstill wonder: Are all these charges really true?

You can also go on like this forever, but to what end? The issue before the country is whether we want to spend the rest of the Clinton term parsing his morality and analyzing the motives of his critics.

Starr could keep investigating, trying to turn up new women and hoping to turn old witnesses. Clinton can figure out a strategy to survive nearly anything. All this is more entertaining than, say, campaign reform, Iraq, Social Security, Medicare, education, the Asian crisis, and child care.

It's time to say enough. It's time to decide: Do we want to let the president govern, or do we want him to leave?

We already know this case will be decided in Congress. So let's move it to Congress fast. Starr should wind down his inquiry now and send his report to the House. If he has outstanding prosecutions, let him go ahead while Congress ponders.

The only grounds for further delay would be the hope that smoking-gun evidence will turn up eventually to settle this case for us. But there's little reason to suspect that staying at this for another several months will produce sudden clarity. We need to make a democratic decision, as we did on Clarence Thomas and Bob Packwood.

Congress should deal with Starr's findings fairly but expeditiously using the House Judiciary Committee headed by Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), a man respected by members of both parties.

Once the issue moves to Congress and the Paula Jones case is decided, Clinton will have no more excuses to prevent him from speaking out. And let Congress make its decision before November's elections, so the voters can render a verdict on Congress's verdict. Many legislators in both parties would prefer delay. But the voters don't seem to want that, and postponing the day of reckoning also carries a political price.

Eight years ago, political scientists Benjamin Ginsberg and Martin Shefter wrote a prescient book, *Politics by Other Means*, in which they argued that the power of the people to decide important matters through elections had been supplanted by a new kind of politics. It is built around press disclosures, judicial proceedings, and investigations. They couldn't have imagined how far this move away from deliberative democratic politics would go. It's time to shut down the sideshow, decide Clinton's fate and, yes, restore power to the people. □

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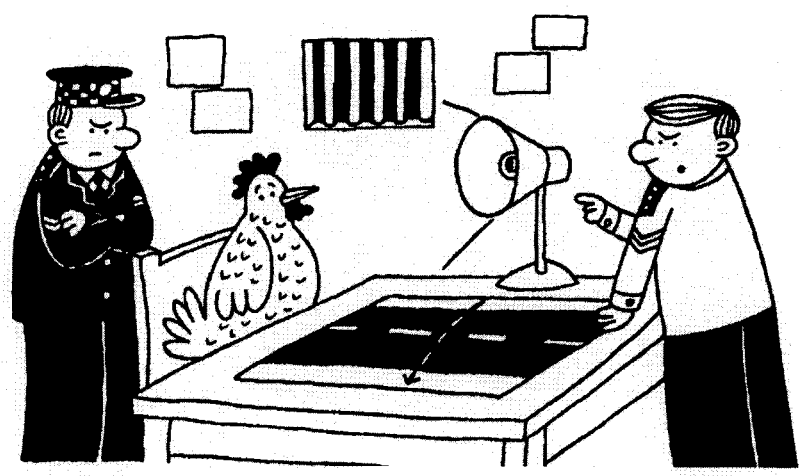

"For the last time, why?"

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Thomas A. Shannon

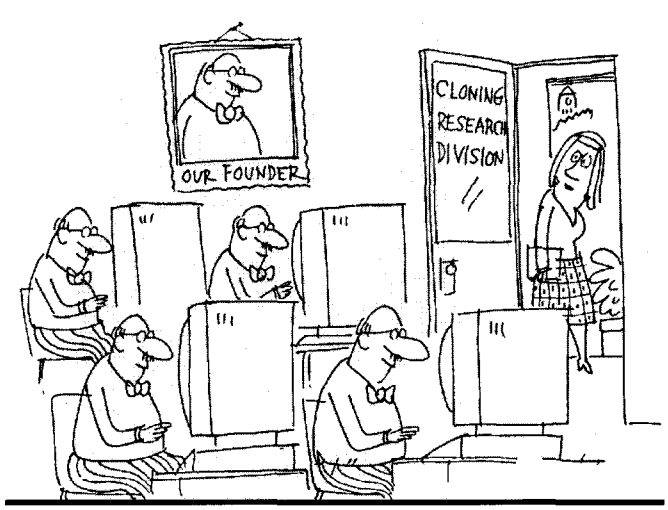
CLONING MYTHS

Time to take thought

Since the birth of Dolly, the cloned sheep, the debate over human cloning has been characterized by misunderstanding and exaggeration. These have been fueled in part by a lack of careful distinctions in popular reports and discourse. For example, three distinct types of cloning—gene cloning, cellular cloning, and whole-organism cloning—have sometimes been fused in media coverage, leading to widespread confusion. Gene cloning multiplies identical copies of various genes; cellular cloning, a more complicated technique, replicates whole cells; and whole-organism cloning—the most complicated—reproduces whole organisms.

Gene and cell cloning are well-established, standard biotechnical research methods and must be distinguished and discussed separately from organism cloning. Organism cloning, à la Dolly, signaled a dramatic scientific breakthrough because Dolly's cloning was accomplished with cells that were six years old and fully differentiated. The common wisdom until then was that such cells could not be reprogrammed to generate a new being. While Dolly has vast ramifications for both animal husbandry and the production of pharmaceuticals, the most important scientific breakthrough was the reactivation of fully differentiated cells, a point frequently missed by popular reports. Recently, this very breakthrough has been called into question by some senior scientists because the procedure has not yet been replicated, and because, in the absence of the ewe from which Dolly's cells were taken, there is no way of verifying that the cells that were used were adult cells rather than fetal cells (the same ewe was pregnant at the time).

Human cloning is an altogether different matter from the cloning of sheep and cattle. This fact has been pointed out not only by ethicists and government officials, but by research scientists. But as in the debate about the cloning of animals, the human cloning debate has been characterized by many misunderstandings. The most common has been that if I were to clone myself, I would create another *me*, because each of us would have the same genetic identity. On reflection, most would recognize that this kind of simplistic genetic reductionism *can't* be right: Identical twins—who share the same genetic identity—are not identical *persons*. Furthermore, such reductionism fails to take into account the importance of environment, experience, physical and psychological factors, and a host of other variables that contribute to an individual's formation and identity.



Another mistaken assumption is that human clones would necessarily act alike: All Michael Jordan clones would be superior basketball stars because of genetic identity. Again, this ignores not only the role of environment, but the constitutive part played by human freedom and endeavor in shaping our identity.

Finally, some have assumed that human cloning would lead to a ready supply of replacement parts to be made available for use by the cloner when, for example, one of his or her organs might fail. But such an assumption fails to acknowledge that a clone would also be a human person with inalienable rights and vital interests—not to mention moral and legal standing—in how his or her body ought to be used. Once we grant that, however, the replacement debate necessarily ends, but not the human cloning debate which now shifts to assisted reproduction.

Can (or should) a couple who have been unable to conceive in any other way that would guarantee a genetic relation to one of the parents be prohibited from using cloning to produce a child? Unless one has moral objections to *all* forms of assisted reproduction, the argument goes, cloning can be yet another morally valid technique for producing a child. While there is a certain logic to this train of thought, there are nonetheless three reasons why its conclusion should be resisted.

First, the argument is predicated on the sovereignty of personal choice: Someone wants the procedure, consents to it, can pay for it, and, therefore, ought to have it. Such an argument begs the question of the sufficiency of individual choice as the only morally relevant value in ethical analysis.

A second argument is a variant of personal choice which states that having a child is a strictly private matter and, therefore, should not be subjected to outside social analysis. But even though the choice is private and assisted-reproduction clinics are privately owned and funded, nonetheless such private choices in private institutions have profound social implications. For example, insurance and health-care interests already play a role in how such choices are mediated because *some* insurance plans cover *some* infertility services and health care during pregnancy, and thus increase the cost of premiums for all members of the plan. Furthermore, since multiple pregnancies are a possibility because

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multiple embryos are implanted to insure a pregnancy, there might be significant intensive-care-unit expenses incurred, a cost which will again be passed along to members of the plan. Such social costs render private choices less private and more open to social evaluation.

A third argument is that as in so many other aspects of American life, the market should rule. Eggs and sperm are currently available for sale (though the price of eggs has just more than doubled to $5,000), as are custom-designed embryos. The technology of cloning can further refine that product helping to market it better. But once again a deeper question has been avoided. For if we market ourselves in such a manner—even to fulfill a noble wish, such as the desire to have a child—and place a quantifiable price on the transaction, we have made ourselves into objects whose price is known but whose value has been forgotten. In so doing, we risk diminishing the value of human life.

The critical question before us, therefore, is whether we can apply the developments in cloning to reproductive technology in such a way as to assure the larger good of human dignity and individuality in a moral manner. To do that we will need both time and discernment. Insuring that we take the time and expend the effort to think hard about these scientific developments constitutes the most critical phase of the ongoing cloning debate. □

Thomas A. Shannon *is professor of religion and social ethics at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester, Massachusetts.*

J. S. Fuerst

PUBLIC HOUSING

Remembering Chicago's success

Though it's a place they'd never dare go, millions of Americans must now feel intimately acquainted with Chicago's Ida B. Wells Homes, the public housing complex featured in Frederick Wiseman's recent three-and-a-half-hour documentary on PBS. Wiseman's new film, like his previous documentaries, bears a humble moniker—in this case, "Public Housing"—and imposes no plot or narration, giving audiences the eerie impression that they're experiencing unmediated reality. And the reality here is often unpleasant.

Wells residents stand grimly in line before a fortified brick blockhouse that turns out to be—a supermarket. A crack addict applies, without apparent success, to a court-ordered treatment program. And the only hope for salvation amidst this squalor comes from an official of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) who, with all the sincerity of a circus barker, boasts about a vague $300 million jobs program.

Reviewers lavished praise on "Public Housing," calling it a groundbreaking look at poverty in America. Though it

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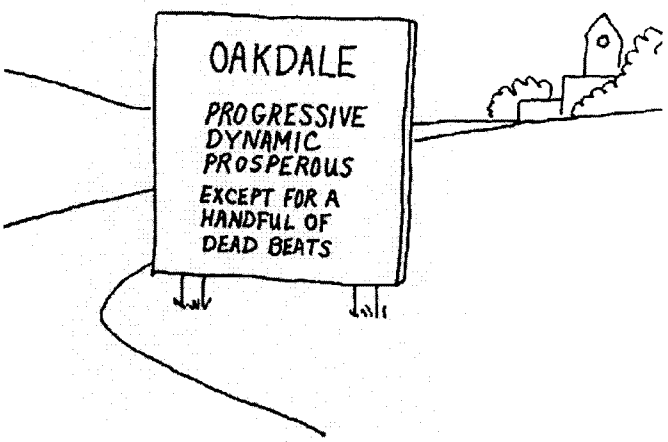

may be good television, "Public Housing" is hardly original. By now, bleak portraits of life in the CHA have become almost a genre unto themselves.

Perhaps the best known of these works is Alex Kotlowitz's 1992 book, *There Are No Children Here*, a harrowing chronicle of the trials two brothers face while growing up in a West Side CHA project. And soon after Kotlowitz's book came out, National Public Radio turned over a tape recorder to two boys from the Wells neighborhood. They produced two radio documentaries, the last of which focused on the 1994 murder of five-year-old Eric Morse, who was thrown from a fourteen-story CHA high-rise by two pre-teens. While these works may serve as a salutary prick to the nation's conscience, they tend to promote some unfortunate ideas about public housing. Usually, the audience comes away with the impression that life in public housing is—and always has been—uniquely depraved.

Though conditions in today's CHA are shameful, Chicago's public housing wasn't always this way. It once worked remarkably well. By looking at its neglected history, one can learn what went wrong with public housing, and how to fix it.

Over the last several years, colleagues and I have interviewed more than a hundred former CHA residents, most of whom grew up in public housing between 1940 and 1960. They do not talk about public housing as a place where bullets capered across barren courtyards or drug deals offered the only signs of commerce. Rather, they speak of safe communities in which working families helped one another achieve their dreams.

In fact, Ida B. Wells was a widely admired haven for two generations of Chicagoans. Under the leadership of the CHA's visionary founding director, Elizabeth Wood, the CHA built and managed some of the best public housing in the nation. Wood faced many of the same challenges that confront today's public-housing managers. The nation's first comprehensive public-housing law, enacted in 1937, contained all sorts of provisions meant to placate private realtors who feared that the government would steal their middle-class clientele. The 1937 law included a strict income limit that effectively excluded all but the poor from public housing.

Nevertheless, Wood carefully screened incoming residents. She made sure to include a healthy mix of working, albeit poor, families. And though decidedly liberal, Wood made sure that her managers moved swiftly to evict any troublesome tenants. Delinquency was rare, vandalism unheard of. Virtually all of the residents we interviewed—and most are now solidly middle class—consider the CHA to have been a profoundly nurturing environment. Many described the developments as "extended families."

Today, children who grew up in CHA projects hold annual reunions that bear more than a passing resemblance to college reunions. That should come as no surprise since many are now doctors, lawyers, executives, or engineers. Today, we scorn public housing as a breeding ground for gangs. But these former residents form the backbone of Chicago's black middle class.

And public housing did not serve only black Chicagoans. In fact, under Wood, the CHA aggressively promoted racial integration. Cabrini-Green, now a much-maligned project, was thoroughly, and successfully, integrated throughout the 1940s and '50s, as were many other CHA developments. Though there were ugly incidents at a few projects, they almost always involved people from outside the development and were clearly exceptional cases. Nevertheless, the controversy generated by those incidents would eventually imperil the CHA. Its decline did not come about through bureaucratic sclerosis, but through a concerted attack on the CHA by aldermen who feared that it would breach the city's racial boundaries. Beginning in the late 1940s, the City Council began blocking CHA efforts to build new projects in white neighborhoods, and in 1954 Wood's aldermanic antagonists finally forced her from the CHA. Only after Wood was gone did the CHA devolve into a corrupt and uncaring agency, one expert at providing patronage jobs but unable to maintain the remarkable communities that Wood had built.

In today's age of ascendant markets, many argue that the only remedy for the ills of public housing is privatization. But the nation's private housing industry has never met the needs of low-income Americans. Even now, as the United States enjoys record rates of homeownership, Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies reports that there is a critical shortage of low-income housing, and that the crisis is only growing worse.

In Chicago alone, more than 100,000 working families—not welfare recipients, but working families—live in substandard dwellings. These are exactly the people that the early CHA served. They are exactly the people that a revitalized public housing program should be serving once again. □

J.S. Fuerst, *an emeritus professor in urban studies at Loyola University, was CHA research director until 1952. He is preparing an oral history of Chicago public housing.*

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CATHOLIC GRADE SCHOOLS

Save them

Kathleen McGarvey Hidy

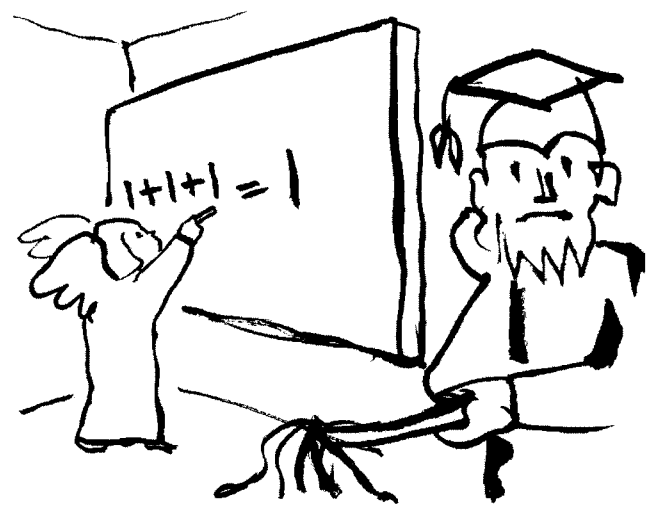
What I remember best of my days as a student in Saint Andrew's grade school in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania, in the 1970s is that life fit together. Every day, my four siblings and I left our home in suburban Philadelphia to attend our parish school, four blocks away. The parish was the geographic, psychological, and spiritual center of the neighborhood, and its school was full of children from families like ours—large Irish and Italian clans, first-generation suburban, white- and blue-collar breadwinners alike. Saint Andrew's was a precious part of the Catholic community that completed the circle of faith formation begun in our home and nourished by our neighborhood church. The great gift of my childhood was that the Catholic sensibility planted in me at the time had a wholeness, beauty, and meaning that would grow in later life.

I believe this Catholic sensibility grew in great measure out of the relationship the parish school had with the parish itself and with the neighborhood. Because the school was rooted in the life of a sacramental community in a particular place, this connectedness provided natural opportunities to reinforce the Catholic faith perspective. In chance encounters at the local supermarket or swim club, Saint Andrew's students could witness their faith affirmed in interaction with fellow students and parishioners. In worship, commerce, and recreation, the gospel, while not always lived out, lurked in these encounters, and we sometimes tripped into the grace these moments afforded.

The sacramental imagination—itself a gift of a Catholic upbringing—takes shape when the sacramental symbols draw their meaning from people's lived experience. Thus a school, church, and community steeped in the Catholic ethos offers the young child—by definition open, impressionable, and imaginative—the chance to experience Catholic theology married to the every day. Faith, learning, and play are situated in a community of believers who also happen to be neighbors. A child's ordinary encounters at school are more likely to be transforming and sacramental when they take shape in and through a faith community. The experience is multivalent, encompassing, and, as such, far different from the one-dimensional model provided through the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) programs, or through home schooling and private academies.

Greater lights than I—Andrew Greeley and James Coleman, for example—have identified and studied part of this phenomenon at work in Catholic schools, using the sociological construct of "social capital." Though my childhood memories may be dismissed as impressionistic, anecdotal, and unreliable, it appears to be verifiable that Catholic schools provide something extra. In May of 1997, Greeley presented a research paper at a Catholic University of America conference on "The Future of Catholic Education" in which he contended that Catholics share stronger "community ties" than do Protestants, and that this "community ethos" is "but one aspect of the larger phenomenon of the 'sacramental' or 'liturgical' imagination." I would venture further that the parish school is uniquely equipped to foster not only social capital and the sacramental imagination, but faith formation itself.

This is not to suggest that parish schools are all idyllic, or that the best of them have no shortcomings. I remember some odd, clearly unhappy nuns, some flawed pedagogic tools (like the wooden pointer broken over my third-grade classmate's head), crowded classrooms, worn textbooks, no gym or cafeteria. Still, Saint Andrew's formed me in a Catholic faith and worldview which blesses me today as I make my way through the adult years of marriage, child-rearing, and career-building.



Kathleen McGarvey Hidy *is a practicing attorney in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

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But I am troubled. As I look to the future, I see that the gift of a parochial-school faith formation may become a rarity. In some inner cities, Catholic schools have been closed by fiat of the diocese, abandoning students to decrepit and dangerous public school systems. Even in newer suburbs with large school-age populations, some parishes opt against building Catholic schools, signaling to parents that faith formation through CCD is a desirable alternative to a Catholic-school formation.

These trends are demonstrable, real, and national in scope. Data published by the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) in 1997 confirm that the total number of Catholic elementary schools in the United States declined from 8,281 in 1976 to 6,903 in 1997, with approximately half a million fewer students enrolled in these schools than twenty years earlier. True, new schools have opened in the past decade, and in the past five years enrollment has shown increases—part of what NCEA president Leonard De Fiore has described as a "true renaissance" for Catholic schools. But NCEA's own research shows that despite these openings, "there is still a great demand for space—many schools have waiting lists."

In sum, the Catholic community in this country appears to be presiding over the gradual dismantling of perhaps its greatest achievement: the creation and maintenance of an academically competitive school system geared to the faith formation of the Catholic young. Parent and pastor, rank-and-file laymen and laywomen, as well as diocesan leaders, all share some responsibility for this decline. Here's why:

In Cincinnati, where I now reside with my husband and two preschool-age children, our parish CCD has swelled beyond the numbers matriculated in our parish school. In part, this comes about because we live in a renowned public school district—one kindergarten teacher has her Ph.D.—where many Catholic parents choose to send their children to the tax-supported bells-and-whistles education offered by our public school. The attitude of these parents is that CCD religious training is sufficient to form and inform their children's Catholicism, and to inoculate their children against the negativity and nihilism of the culture. This attitude betrays a certain naiveté about what constitutes adequate faith formation among the young. Even an excellent CCD program, by definition and design, cannot do what a Catholic

Only for the rich?

The history of the Catholic church in the United States is largely one of transition from the poor, immigrant church of the ghetto to a church of the suburbs. Most American Catholics need only look back a generation or two to mark the approxiate point their families became "middle class." Chances are they owe it to a Sister Agnes or a Sister Mary Alice. For the institution most responsible for that transition is the Catholic school, and the people most responsible are the nuns. Their insistence on hard work, their uncompromising faith in God, their belief that all students could succeed, and their personal financial sacrifices spoke eloquently of the church's broader mission to serve the poor within the United States.

But the mission of the sisters was never primarily economic. If that were all there was to it, many could argue "mission accomplished." First and foremost, the mission was to mediate Catholic culture to students.

Given that aim, the need for Catholic schools is more acute now than ever. We live in a society that trivializes our faith by privatizing it and, worse, is openly hostile to religious claims. We are too busy to recognize that our Catholicism no longer defines us, that our values, spending habits, language, and attitudes are indistinguishable from anyone else's. It is not our faith but our social class that shapes us.

We need Catholic schools as an antidote to our religious amnesia. We need them to remind us about the beauty of God in "dappled things": our students—rich-poor, black-white-red-yellow-brown, smart and learning-disabled. We need schools to train our children in the practices of the church—its songs, its liturgy, its prayers, its customs—and to prompt them to be open to grace. We need Catholic schools because we and our children need to be called to serve others.

The nuns, of course, are largely gone. In 1873, the Sisters of Loretto founded the Catholic high school in Montgomery, Alabama, where I am now principal. One hundred twenty-four years later, in 1997, the last of these sisters left the school. She had been a chemistry teacher for thirty-five years; before that she taught first, second, and third grade in combined classes of forty-five. I presume she is trying to get some rest at the Loretto motherhouse in Kentucky, though I doubt that this remarkable woman is handling retirement gracefully.

We in Montgomery, as in many other Catholic communities across the nation, find ourselves at the crossroad: Who will continue the historic mission of the sisters? The pressure is on. The cost of a Catholic education has risen dramatically in order to pay salaries for lay faculty (still, the average Catholic school teacher earns from $5,000 to $8,000 a year less than a pub-

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parish school was built to do: complete the circle of faith begun in the home and lived out in the local parish community and surrounding neighborhood. Unlike the much-studied impact of Catholic schools on the urban poor, the suburban solution of reliance on CCD has not yielded the data needed to prove its worth. As Andrew Greeley noted in his Catholic University paper, "I know of no evidence that 'religious education' has any independent impact at all on subsequent adult behavior of those who participated in it....The case for such programs has not been made, not with any data to back it up."

One would think that this lacuna, coupled with the studies that demonstrate the positive impact Catholic schools have on the Catholic young, argues in favor of a vigorous, sustained debate in the U.S. Catholic community over the differences between CCD and Catholic-school faith formation. At a minimum, our lack of data strongly suggests a pause before opting for the future dominance of a CCD model: a caution that applies not only to parents but to the Catholic leadership, whose silence on the relative merits of these two types of faith formation remains curious and troubling.

Despite the large number of Catholic parents who have opted for CCD in Cincinnati, waiting lists at many parish schools are long. Parents fret over whether space will be available when their children reach kindergarten age. Parish councils are charged with the unpleasant task of defining how admission to these schools will be determined. Transferring into many of these schools in later grades is virtually impossible; the space isn't there. I have heard firsthand stories from other dioceses across the country where families must compete for limited space in their parish schools, a situation acknowledged by the NCEA.

This scarcity, unheard of when I was growing up, is caused, in part, by shifting demographics. As suburbs push further and further out from city limits, the families that follow search for nearby Catholic schools to accommodate their children. An absence of geographic parish boundaries in some dioceses, coupled with the failure of some newer parishes to build or sponsor schools, has launched an avalanche of applications for admission to good parish schools in the vicinity.

For example, here in Cincinnati the largest parish in the archdiocese has no school. This parish functions as a "hyper-church." It caters to support groups of every stripe: the young,

lic school teacher). High school tuitions in diocesan Catholic high schools are between $3,000 and $5,000 a year. Middle- to lower-middle-class families, particularly those with more than one child, can barely afford to send their children to Catholic schools any longer.

I find distressing the number of affluent younger Catholics—themselves living testimonials to the success of Catholic schools—who are opting out of Catholic schools and placing their children in private schools. They have the economic means to help Catholic schools the most. But for many of them, social pressures to be in the "right" circles, or the expectation that Catholic schools should have all the accouterments of a wealthy suburban or private school (state-of-the-art athletic programs, finely manicured campuses, the newest technology) pull them away.

There are trade-offs. A woman of considerable means recently told me that her child was not in a particular Catholic school because "it didn't have a decent fine arts program." This lack would have forced her to "seek out private lessons at some expense and inconvenience to the family." But was the cost of these lessons more or less than the difference in tuition between the private and the Catholic school? And was she equally "inconvenienced" by taking her daughter to another place for her religious education, presumably a CCD class? And did those classes do a better job than the Catholic school? Is it more important to have her daughter receive art lessons at school or to grow up within a Catholic community where the practices and values of the church are regarded as "normal" by the students? Of course we should have good fine arts programs in Catholic schools. I don't want families to be forced to choose between the arts and religious education! But we cannot offer comprehensive fine arts programs if that means we become too expensive for middle-class Catholics. We can't become a private school with a Catholic label. Here, I believe, affluent Catholics have a special responsibility, for with their assistance, Catholic schools can provide a quality education for all children, even as we keep tuitions down.

For those of us who work in the schools, the tradition of excellence in teaching and character formation—which is the sisters' legacy—is both daunting and encouraging. It is daunting because people have come to expect much from Catholic schools. It's encouraging because we realize the potential transforming effects Catholic schools can have on both students and families. Most of our families are proof of this fact.

FAUSTIN N. WEBER

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the old, the divorced, the widowed, the rosary-praying, the child-raising, the socially conscious, and the just plain social. I'm told that building a school, entailing the commitment to a single purpose that bricks and mortar require, is not a likelihood. The decision by such a parish not to build a school—this in an area with large numbers of school-age children—has a significant impact on all the neighboring parish schools, which are now stretched to overcapacity by the children from the hyper-parish.

The Catholic community in this country appears to be presiding over the gradual dismantling of perhaps its greatest achievement: the creation and maintenance of an academically competitive school system geared to the faith formation of the Catholic young.

This decision, and similar ones made by like-minded parishes across the country, reveal an undercurrent of individualism, certainly at play within the secular culture, that has seeped or flooded into the American Catholic community. Notions of stewardship, the common good, the responsibility of all adults in a community to rear the young, have weakened or disappeared. We are left with adults who view themselves as autonomous, who join and invest only in those groups and activities that are of benefit to themselves. Sacrificing for others and for those who will follow in our footsteps no longer seems a natural, to-be-expected response.

Another emerging trend that further undermines the Catholic parochial school system is the home-schooling movement. In some cases home schooling is a parental reaction to the religious training being offered in the parish school, perceived by some as offering a "watered-down" catechesis, or, in rarer cases, as being too traditional. In both cases, parents pull the children out of the parish school, and either teach them at home or try to launch and support alternative private schools.

These are trends that further weaken the already tenuous ties that hold parish communities together. Circling the wagons through home schooling deprives the parish schools of these parents' insights and talents and of their children's participation and example in the school. Launching private academies tends to make the faith formation of the Catholic young look rather like an exercise in choosing ice cream: pick the flavor that fits your taste. And these choices heighten a divisiveness among the Catholic faithful over what faith should be handed down to the Catholic young. Where we cannot agree, we do not stay and dialogue, persuade, and build consensus. Instead, we dissent, depart, and build a rival ice cream shop.

A still bleaker picture is emerging in the inner cities. Here, despite remarkable achievements, past and present, evidenced in mounds of statistics attesting to high academic standards and quality-of-life improvements, Catholic schools are struggling to survive. Vanishing religious vocations that once assured a supply of low-cost labor, accompanied by soaring costs for insurance and the maintenance of aging buildings, make the inner-city schools voracious dinosaurs, eating up a disproportionate share of diocesan and parish finances as the Catholic population joins in the flight to the suburbs.

Still, the presence of Catholic schools in urban wastelands is a signal that those communities are worth something to us, the church. The good done by these schools cannot be measured adequately in dollars expended but rather in lives rescued and enriched. The children who attend the schools, many of them not Catholic, are literally saved by this type of intervention, and their families are afforded a lesson in Christian stewardship and solidarity.

What is to be done? First, we need a deep appreciation of what the parochial school system in the United States has achieved in the past in forming the faith of the Catholic young, constituting a legacy that should not be squandered. Simply allowing present trends to continue without fact-finding, reflection, discussion, and debate would be irresponsible.

Second, discussion of the future of Catholic faith formation must not be left to parish councils or diocesan commissions or to professional organizations operating under the aegis of the national hierarchy. This is a policy choice, or a set of choices, that should engage us all. Whether or not we are parents, we are all stewards of our heritage, accountable for its preservation and transmission to the future. Granted, there are no mechanisms for decision-making or policy-setting by the American Catholic community as a whole. But if the centrality of this concern is grasped, it will be seen that our future course should not be delegated, consciously or by default, to a select group of our peers, or to the "professionals." And there are ways in which discussion and debate can be brought to the forefront of our consciousness.

Third, and significantly, the path to maintaining an available and affordable parochial school system lies, I believe, in solving the financial riddle created when parish schools lost most of the subsidy provided by the low-cost labor of nuns and priests who have been replaced by more expensive (though still underpaid) lay teachers. This factor, coupled with the substantial costs of building and maintaining a school system today, virtually assures that a parochial school system can survive in the long term only through the development of an ambitious, long-range, comprehensive financial strategy. Carrying out this task will require not only finan-

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cial skills but considerable commitment, and without grassroots, wide-ranging involvement from rank-and-file Catholics, lay and cleric alike, the undertaking will fail. In my estimation, feasible solutions exist; many are already on the drawing board, including lobbied-for tax credits (never fully embraced by the Catholic electorate as a high-priority campaign issue) and/or a school system financed by endowment.

Decisions made by individual dioceses to close inner-city schools that are financially draining, though they serve as true sanctuaries for their students; decisions made by individual pastors and parish councils not to build schools but instead to rely on CCD programs; decisions made by families to use public schools and entrust their children' religious formation to CCD classes; decisions by other parents for home schooling or sponsorship of private academies—all these imperil the extraordinary achievements of the Catholic school system in this country. We—that is, the rest of us, the larger church—have failed to address the consequences these decisions will have. We have not thought and talked about what needs to be done to force a change in the attitudes and economics driving our school system toward decline and demise. What will be the state of faith formation of the Catholic young in the year 2050? By then, will the legacy of available, affordable parochial schools have been frittered away? And if so, at what cost to the faith and the faithful? The issue of how we rear children in the faith deserves our full attention: hearts, minds, and pocketbooks. □

Francis J. Principe

TEACHING CATHOLICISM

Downs & ups over four decades

Things are different now. For forty years I have been a New York priest teaching the Catholic faith in two diocesan high schools and as an adjunct professor in several colleges and graduate schools. This has entailed living with significant and continuing change: social, ecclesial, pedagogic. Not all the change has been easy, pleasant, or even healthy; some has been near-disastrous. In my experience, as will be seen, current trends are hopeful.

In September 1959, I was assigned to teach in what was then the largest Catholic boys' high school in the Archdiocese of New York. The faculty—forty diocesan priests, fifty religious brothers, and three laymen—taught a student body of 2,200, drawn mostly from lower middle-class Irish and Italian families in the South Bronx. Academically it was a fine school. More than 90 percent of its graduates went to college, many with scholarships. Most of the priests on the faculty had or were working toward advanced degrees.

Religion was no minor subject in that era. Ponderous textbooks were in use in all four years. Topics were formidable: God's existence, the Trinity, creation, the Incarnation, the church, the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and morality. The teaching of Catholic morality was structured around the Ten Commandments but was defended by natural law arguments, particularly in the field of sexuality. Scripture was used sparingly, often only to provide "proof texts" bolstering the rational argumentation and the magisterial teachings. This traditional approach to religious education was fortified by an extensive program of spiritual activities. The school provided opportunities for daily Mass and frequent confession; weekly Benediction and frequent Marian services were well attended; every year during Holy Week the students took part in a three-day silent retreat. No doubt some of the religious instruction was arid, and some of the retreat sermons were full of hellfire and brimstone. But today most of the school's graduates remain grateful for the quality of the education and religious training they received.

Changes began slowly in the 1960s, gained momentum in the '70s. Many of them were societal and/or economic, but inevitably affected the school's atmosphere and its approach to education, including religious studies. By 1970 the flight to the suburbs, rises in tuition, the opening of other Catholic high schools, and the physical decay of the South Bronx had reduced the enrollment from 2,200 to around 1,200. Ethnic changes in the community the school serves and problems in urban public schools brought increasing numbers of inner-city Latino and black students to the school. Many were non-Catholic and even more from poor, one-parent households. A significant number had language problems, weak academic backgrounds, poor self-discipline, and minimal instruction in religion. Meantime, the collapse of vocations plus leakage from religious orders and the diocesan priesthood reduced the number of teaching brothers to seven and teaching priests to fifteen. Male lay teachers made up the majority of faculty. Most were dedicated and effective; yet the changes in faculty, along with the increased number of non-Catholic students, weakened the once-pervasive Catholic identity of the school.

These decades were times of societal turmoil. The civil rights movement, the Vietnam War protests, major political scandals—all these came at the same time as the Second Vatican Council. Social unrest and Catholic reform fed each other and in a way lived off each other. Living in the midst of fundamental social and cultural change, the American church was prodded from within to bring itself up to date.

Not all the results were happy ones. Various programs introduced to "update" every level of religious education in response to Vatican II and to the challenges of the times led to confusion in religious studies. Many were extremely weak in intellectual content; some were introduced to support some specific social, religious, or political agenda. The presentation of Catholic teachings was often selective, emphasizing some, ignoring if not denying others.

This was particularly evident in the field of morality and social justice. Some programs promoted acceptance of "the new morality," calling for a more personal, less legalistic ap-

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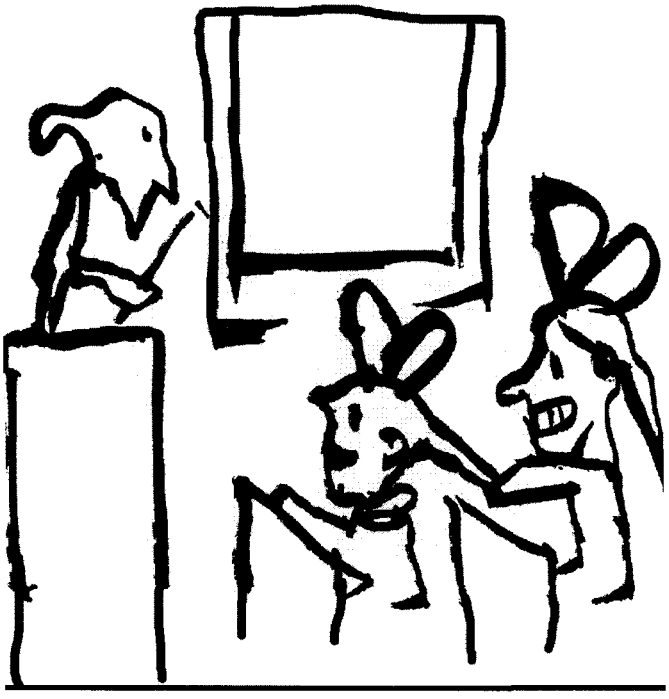

proach to sinfulness. The virtue of love (often vaguely defined) was to be paramount, along with the individual conscience and right of self-determination. Whatever merits this approach may have, it produced near chaos in the realm where the "new morality" had its strongest impact: sexuality. For many high school students (as well as others), it meant that nothing was forbidden, provided you were truly "in love" and "felt" that what you wanted to do was right. Trying to build sexual morality on so vague and subjective a foundation in an already permissive society was a recipe for disaster.

There were also significant changes in Catholic piety and spiritual life during these two decades, some salutary, some regrettable. One could welcome Mass in the vernacular, emphasis on full participation in the liturgy, the trend toward Scripture-based homilies. But the effort to displace the novena/Rosary style of devotional spirituality with something livelier and more relevant, though well-intentioned, sometimes had dubious results, leading to the use of "poster" art, pedestrian readings, and music of questionable quality.

But in 1981, when I was reassigned to a large Catholic coed high school in the North Bronx as chair of its religion department, I sensed the stirrings of healthier change. The decade of the '80s was a time of consolidation in religious education. The intellectual content of religion courses became more substantial. The basic truths of Catholicism were again presented, but now with constant references to their foundations in Scripture and tradition. This presentation defines Catholics as members of a faith community that feeds its understanding of faith, morality, and spirituality on the word of God and the tradition that was born of it and that shapes our understanding of that written word. The courses are not simple recitals of Bible stories or literal-fundamentalist readings, but aim at a critical and sophisticated understanding.

Church history is also much more prominent in today's Catholic religious education. Students are invited to understand not only that Catholics are "people of the Book," but that we form a "community of memory." In its 2,000-year history, the church has spread more widely and is more deeply rooted than any other religion. There is no field of human endeavor—political, social, economic, cultural, artistic, intellectual—that has not felt the church's influence. The church has been able to adjust, sometimes slowly and with difficulty, to changing cultural and historical contexts without abandoning the essentials of her message. Students learn, as they should, that necessary adjustments have sometimes come slowly and painfully, in part because the church includes sinners as well as saints, diehard Bourbons as well as visionary reformers.

Teaching Catholic morality in the context of a society that prizes self-fulfillment over self-discipline, that accepts or at lease tolerates premarital sex, abortion, and divorce, and gives relatively little weight to the demands of justice in social, economic, and political realms (racism, poverty amidst plenty) is a daunting challenge. Emphasis in the current approach falls on presenting Christian morality as an imitation of Christ, on an understanding that the more Christ-like we become, the more human we are. The church's valuation of the dignity of every person becomes more credible when the teaching on abortion is presented in the context of the consistent ethic of life, and is thereby linked with the church's approach to the death penalty, questions of war and peace, and the care of the seriously ill.

As I said at the beginning, "things are different now"—and perhaps the most visible difference is that the majority of religion teachers now are laymen and laywomen. Lay teachers are of course indispensable simply because there are no longer enough priests and religious to staff the classrooms. Beyond that, however, the lay religion teachers I have encountered (and not only in my own school) bring a surprising level of professional expertise in theology, Scripture, history, and educational methodology to the task. Most exhibit not only professional competence but strong devotion to Jesus Christ and the church; for them, the work is more a vocation than a profession; many undertake this ministry at serious financial sacrifice. Observing their interaction with students, I sometimes suspect that their lay status makes it easier for them to become spiritual confidants for the students and to model for them the life of Christians "in the world."

I am convinced, then, that this lay participation is a gift from the Holy Spirit, bringing a new presence and tone to American Catholic education. We have reason to be grateful to them, and because of them to be hopeful for the future of the church in the United States. □

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WHOSE CATHOLIC IDENTITY?

Let's look to the future, not the past

Nancy Haegel

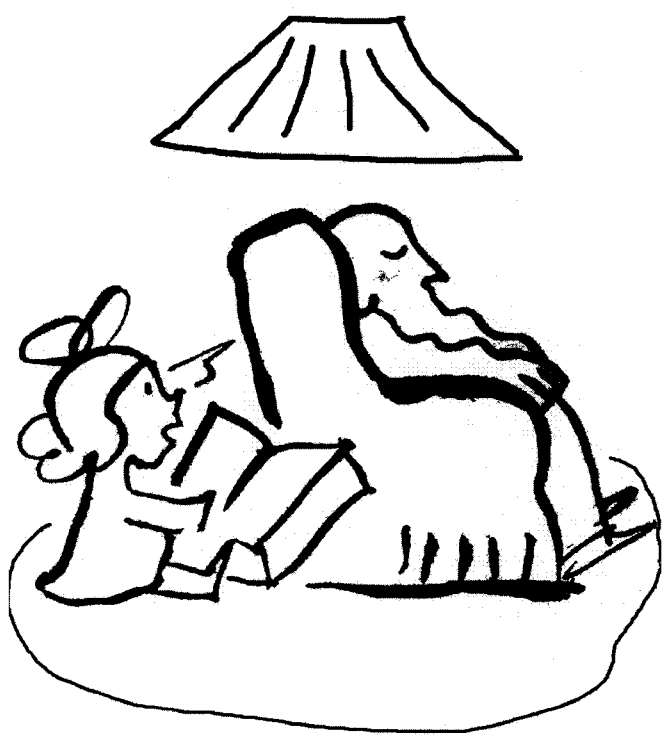
In his book *Coming of Age in the Universe* (Morrow, 1997), science writer Timothy Ferris describes how, in just the past three or four decades, we have come as human beings to some fundamental scientific understanding of the universe we inhabit. Yet our advances in knowledge have simultaneously, and perhaps more importantly, revealed how little we really know. "Our ignorance," he writes, "has always been with us, and always will be. What is new is our awareness of it, our awakening to its fathomless dimensions, and it is *this*, more than anything else, that marks the coming of age of our species." We have come this far only to realize that most of the work still lies ahead.

Catholic colleges and universities in the United States "came of age" in the decades following World War II, experiencing tremendous growth in numbers and size, and in complexity, independence, and aspirations. Today they are a key part of the fabric of U.S. higher education, with broad responsibilities to both the church and society. They also face questions of Catholic identity and ecclesial authority, and many struggle to find new ways to relate to their founding religious communities. Fifty years after the war, thirty years after the establishment of lay boards of trustees, the challenges of coming of age remain.

Since graduation from the University of Notre Dame in 1981, I have been a participant in many discussions about the identity and future direction of Catholic higher education. I have served as a mentor in Collegium, a summer institute on Catholic intellectual life for young faculty and graduate students, and participated in discussions groups, both local and national, sponsored by the Lilly Endowment. I serve on the board of trustees of two institutions where these questions are carefully considered, and I now teach at a Catholic university, though that has not always been the case.

Recently, my enthusiasm for the "identity" discussions has waned. Part of that may be due to the simultaneous parenting of a toddler and a teen-ager, whose own "coming of ages" are more demanding and more delightful than most meetings will ever be. There is another reason, however: I have come to the conclusion that these conversations have not been very effective in engaging the wider community, have often not moved productively beyond their points of initiation. There have been plenty of meetings, but little outcome; much spirited repartee, but little consensus.

A major limitation of the discussion to date, I believe, is that by and large it has failed to engage recent graduates from Catholic higher education and the many women professionals who now serve these institutions. Consider a brief (admittedly incomplete) list of authors whose articles and books have been most widely debated and discussed: David O'Brien, James Burtchaell, C.S.C., Ken Woodward, Joseph Komonchak, Alice Gallin, O.S.U., Philip Gleason, William Shea, Michael Buckley, S.J., James Heft, S.M., George Marsden. All graduated from college between 1942 and 1965. Women's voices, with few exceptions, are almost nonexistent in the published debate. There have been several meetings of women in Catholic higher education, and Collegium, by most accounts, has been successful in engaging younger faculty and graduate students in substantive discussions of Catholic higher education. Yet younger graduates and women clearly constitute, in some overlapping combination, the majority of people who will soon be providing the leadership



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for Catholic higher education, so that their general absence from the formative dialogue should be a cause for concern.

Why have women and younger people shown little interest in publicly joining the debate?

One part is clear. For many recent graduates and for many women (it is useful to remember that women do presently and have for almost twenty years constituted the majority of graduates from Catholic colleges and universities), the clarion calls of alarm about loss of Catholic identity that have spurred at least parts of the discussion sound too much like the mourning of a past, privileged time. And it is probably not coincidental that the last of the "good times" was the era that formed most of those now raising the alarm.

The celebration of a time when education was integrated, when conversation was broad and interdisciplinary, when Catholic culture suffused the very existence at universities and colleges, is difficult to share, especially for women who were excluded from many Catholic universities during those times. One suspects that everything seemed so integrated and so clear because the ideas and the people that would have brought other experiences, definitions, and questions weren't present yet. The departure of what some mourn corresponds too closely to the arrival of women, predominantly lay faculty, and lay boards of trustees, for the connection to be conveniently dismissed.

The idea that authentic identity somehow has been lost assumes that it was once present. If, however, it is an ideal or goal toward which we still strive, then it is easier to see why so many women, for example, work hard and happily now in all areas of Catholic higher education, while joining little in the cries of concern. They are more likely to be, as Alice Gallin has suggested (quoting Canadian theologian Mary Malone), "faithful to the church that is to be"—faithful, indeed, to the Catholic university that has yet to be realized.

Much of the discussion, however, has not been restorationist in tone, and so one must look deeper to understand the silence (published silence, at least) of so many. Another factor, I sense, is that the starting points for these debates, implicitly or explicitly, have often been in response to one of two ecclesial issues: the negotiations over the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae* and/or the decline in the numbers of professed religious who are available and/or desire to serve in higher education. The implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae* will be decided at a level far removed from most faculty members. It is a discussion among presidents, bishops, and Rome that individuals may try to follow and appreciate, but few are likely to see as their own. For the younger generations, ecclesial issues do not seem to be as important as they were to the generation that experienced Vatican II.

The decline in the number of priests and religious is certainly a more immediate phenomenon on many campuses. The Catholic character of the schools had, for many years, been largely defined by and identified with the members of the founding religious community. Despite Vatican II's emphasis on the "people of God," the experience of both laity and religious at the time of the transitions to lay boards of trustees was that Father or Sister was responsible for the Catholic identity of the institution. With the arrival of lay boards, as Gallin notes in her study *Independence and a New Partnership in Catholic Higher Education* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), a foremost question, was "Without control by religious communities, what would keep the colleges Catholic?" Now the question is not control, but presence.

Most commentators on the subject agree that without the full partnership of significant numbers of lay people—Catholic, those of other Christian traditions, and supportive people of all faiths and none—the Catholic character of the schools cannot be sustained. As a result, there have been various attempts on campuses to talk about the charisms of the founding orders, to try more effectively to share the vision that founded and sustained the school so that the laity have the opportunity to share and articulate it more fully. These efforts can be valuable, but they can also be seen as a last-minute effort to energize the laity to "fill in," as they are being called to "fill in" in parishes all around the country.

Lay people have gradually taken on the work of teaching and administration at Catholic schools over a long period of time. But in many schools religious have also played major roles in the lives of students outside the classroom, often living with them in dormitories and residence halls. They have served as counselors, confessors, and companions, often around the clock, in key formative years in people's lives. This unique presence may be difficult, if not impossible, to replace with lay people. In the case of priests, this is in part because of the role of the sacraments. It is also a practical reality of the demands that family and children make upon many lay people.

But the influence and the lasting importance of this type of nurturing presence, whether pastoral or intellectual, is evident in the stories people tell about their Catholic education. At institutions founded by male religious orders, these are often stories of compassionate, sometimes eccentric, often demanding, perhaps inspiring priests or brothers who were present in ways that others were not. At Notre Dame, to this day, similar stories are told of the "bachelor dons," professors who once lived in the dorms with students. As single men, living with other men, their story is as close to the priests' story as one can get.

This is not to suggest that lay faculty cannot be available to students in meaningful and formative ways. They are now and have been for years. It is important to recognize, however, that these are generally not the stories we tell at Catholic schools. The story of father and son, so central in Christianity, has been central on many Catholic campuses as well, reflected in the stories of priests and the young men they nurture. If we expect the lay faculty to take more ownership of the spiritual as well as the academic future of the schools, we must allow them to lay claim to their own styles and their own stories. These stories may, at times, sound radically different from those we have known. Despite all good inten-

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tions, our history and our church make it difficult at times to fully recognize the Catholic identity in newer guise.

At the same time, it is hard to envision a vibrant Catholic environment without a rich sacramental life, and it is through renewed interest in its sacramental world view that Catholic intellectual life is currently hoping to revitalize itself. Worship, specifically celebration of the Eucharist, is without debate part of Catholic identity. Male religious communities confront these needs daily as they struggle to place fewer people in increasingly demanding positions of leadership, while at the same time maintaining pastoral presence for a growing Catholic community. In this sense, the future of Catholic higher education is deeply tied to the future of ordained ministry in the Catholic church, and it is difficult at times, particularly for those who are not Catholic, that this topic is often under the table rather than on it.

It is not coincidental, I believe, that it is at the universities and colleges founded by men's religious orders that the "identity question" is now engaged most vociferously. Most colleges founded by women religious have already been through a significant, sometimes painful, transition, as the numbers of both the schools and the professed religious have shrunk. Many institutions have reestablished and recommitted themselves in a variety of creative ways, often with lay presidents, while maintaining their ties to the founding community. Not all will agree that these efforts have succeeded. But the transition, I suspect, was eased (though not easy) because the religious leadership was not ordained, not tied in the same way to leadership in the church. And women have always stood apart, in some way, from the stories of father and son that continue to hold such a mystique.

Are there ways to start the conversation at a different place, to remove from center stage the parts of our history and the internal church issues that too often limit rather than inform the broader debate? First, any reflection on the past should flow naturally from an honest discussion about the present and the future. I have yet to encounter a faculty member, lay or religious, male or female, old or young, Catholic or not, who is not interested in talking about the future of his or her institution. They are likely to withdraw, however, if they find that their own experience is suspect (how often have we been told how little younger people "know about their faith"?) or discover that certain issues, like the role of women and the future of ordained ministry, are germane to the topic but discouraged in the discussion.

We should also dispel the notion that these discussions are important primarily in response to the decline in religious or the implementation of *Ex corde ecclesiae*. These issues too often restrict us from seeing the work that we do from a larger perspective. The future of Catholic colleges and universities is important because of our belief in education and scholarship and in the gospel—with the conviction that all three can flourish together. Perhaps coming of age is simply the realization of how far we have yet to go. □

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Richard Alleva

REAL ACTORS v. REAL SLOBS

'Twilight' & 'The Big Lebowski'

Robert Benton's *Twilight* gives us a new subgenre: geriatric *film noir*. Hoary plot maneuvers, leisurely pacing, mellow photography (sunset pinks dominate), a cast of magnificently aging stars, and a measure of sarcasm and violence visited on overeager young punks by a seventy-three-year-old but still-fit Paul Newman, all ensure that this movie will be a staple in retirement home video collections for decades to come. (Benton's *The Late Show* also had an aging detective-hero in Art Carney, but that was a screwball comedy, not *noir*.)

Harrry Ross, ex-cop, ex-private eye, and ex-alcoholic, is living on the dwindling bounty of two ex-movie stars, the cancer-ridden Jack Ames and his still seductive wife, Catherine, for whom Harry carries a torch that he keeps burning in the Ames household where he functions as a sort of superannuated houseboy. A shady errand assigned to Harry by the husband revives old speculations that Jack murdered Catherine's first husband decades earlier. Harry moves closer and closer to the truth, striving to tell the guilty from the innocent and hoping that Catherine falls into the latter category.

The unfolding of this story is one long stroll down *film noir* memory lane. Ah yes, there goes the hero inching forward through the seedy apartment when no one answers his knock, and guess what he's going to find in the back room? You got it. And when Ross smashes a punk's face down on top of a bar, does the bartender rush over to ask the patrons to go a little easier on the appurtenances or does he just mumble a nervous "Everything all right over there?" and quickly look away so that Harry can then move on to choke holds? Right again! And yes, there is that "This is a lousy way to make a living" speech that all detectives have to make in the penultimate reel, immediately followed by the plea to the police lieutenant,"Just give me twenty-four hours to find the killers," a request granted, of course, which leads to the final gunplay capped by the inevitable curtain speech by our hero: "You rich people are capable of anything." If you've read enough Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald, why would you pay eight dollars to see this movie? Why couldn't you stay at home, write it yourself, and find an agent to sell it?

Actually, there are four reasons to see *Twilight*: Paul Newman, Susan Sarandon, Gene Hackman, James Garner. I won't say that any of them are operating at peak performance (as Newman was in his last movie, *Nobody's Fool*), but they are awfully good. Hackman gives perhaps the most interesting performance as Jack Ames, making us understand how likable fatuous egomaniacs can sometimes be. Sarandon does the *femme fatale* number to perfection and even humanizes it enough to convince us that such a woman is capable of her own version of fidelity.

But in their scenes together, Newman and Garner inhabit the emotional center of the movie. These old gumshoes seem to embody the film's title but in completely different ways. Newman's Harry Ross is an aging urban man and a lifetime of frustration has left him tense, rattled, alert, bitter, yet still hopeful. The dinosaur as man of honor. Garner's Raymond Hope is an old, smart hillbilly who has made it in the big city; he's let himself go slack but knows where all the bodies are buried. A dragon sitting on a hoard of gold may fall asleep but his tail can still flick round and crack your head open.

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When this sour romantic and this gloating realist get together, something happens to the two actors playing them. Star chemistry, yes, but it's more like a friendly duel called Let's See Who Can Underact the Other off the Screen. Newman flicks his gaze up, then down to the floor, thereby suggesting a lifetime of opportunities flubbed. Garner arches (ever so slightly) one eyebrow and calls all objective reality into question. Newman twists the corner of his mouth up a micrometer for a microsecond, lets it drop. Garner counters by doing something nonchalant with ice cubes in a glass. Newman then tries to give Garner a lesson in how putting a cigarette in the corner of the mouth can shade a banal line of dialogue into eloquence, but Garner trumps this with the sort of frozen grin that's more frightening than a volley of oaths. Newman leans against a car. Garner leans against a balcony railing. We all lean forward in our seats to catch the next quietly outrageous and character-revealing shtick.

Robert Benton's direction is as smooth and lithe as his script is arthritic. But it is his aging stars that turn this movie into a mellow pleasure.

The latest effort by Ethan and Joel Coen—but stop! To refer to a Coen movie as an "effort" is so utterly unhip. And inept. To begin again: the latest cinematic snicker or sneer or shrug by Hollywood's most coddled iconoclasts is *The Big Lebowski*. Encouraged by the relative coherence and humanity (*relative*, mind you) of the brothers' previous film, *Fargo*, I watched the opening reels of this one with a certain hopefulness. The initial situation held possibilities: a Reaganite billionaire named Lebowski hires—for reasons I won't go into—a piece of wreckage from sixties radicalism also named Lebowski, a.k.a. "the Dude," to be the bagman for the ransom of his supposedly kidnapped wife. Earlier, the rich L had sneered at the poor L as one of "the bums" (that is, counterculturalists) who "lose...will always lose." The stage seems set for the Dude not only to rescue the trophy wife but—as the representative of one decade taking revenge on the beneficiary of a later one—to turn the tables on his crass employer. (And, in the story's background, the Gulf War is being waged by Reagan's successor—political significance!)

Well, something roughly like that happens, but...I should have known better. A third of the way into the movie, the Coens are up to their old tricks and are betrayed by their old tics. Every character, including the hero, is a freak of some sort, so we care about none of them (though I must add that John Goodman gives a superb performance as a psychotic Viet vet). Every scene begins or ends or climaxes with a grotesque stunt, so our capacity for surprise soon shrinks. As the grotesqueries multiply and the scenery-chewing escalates, the laid-back hippy hero (though agreeably played by Jeff Bridges) soon goes the way of all neutrals surrounded by monsters: he's, dramatically speaking, marginalized, so that the story no longer has an emotional center. Since nearly every plot twist is stupidly motivated, the audience stops following the story *qua* story and is reduced to watching Stupid Human Tricks.

It might be argued that the Coens weren't trying to tell a coherent detective story but were out to raise our expectations of one in order to satirically dismantle our expectations. To which I would answer: why? In 1973, Robert Altman did a superb demolition job on the hard-boiled detective genre with his *The Long Goodbye*, featuring a shambling version of Philip Marlowe confounded at every turn. But Altman had a vision: he was showing the last vestige of chivalry being undone by the physically sleek, fiscally hard-headed narcissists of Southern California, thereby both mocking and fulfilling Raymond Chandler's romance of solitary macho men walking down mean streets with honor.

The Coens have no such vision; they just despise everyone. And they are so delighted with their own filmmaking that they've forgotten they are supposed to delight us. Undergraduates going through their obligatory nihilistic phase may laugh in complicity with the movie, but their youth is their excuse. What can the Coens plead?

If *Twilight* is geriatric *noir*, *Lebowski* is slob *noir*, but not because the hero is a physical wreck. The slobbiness is in the storytelling. □

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Celia Wren

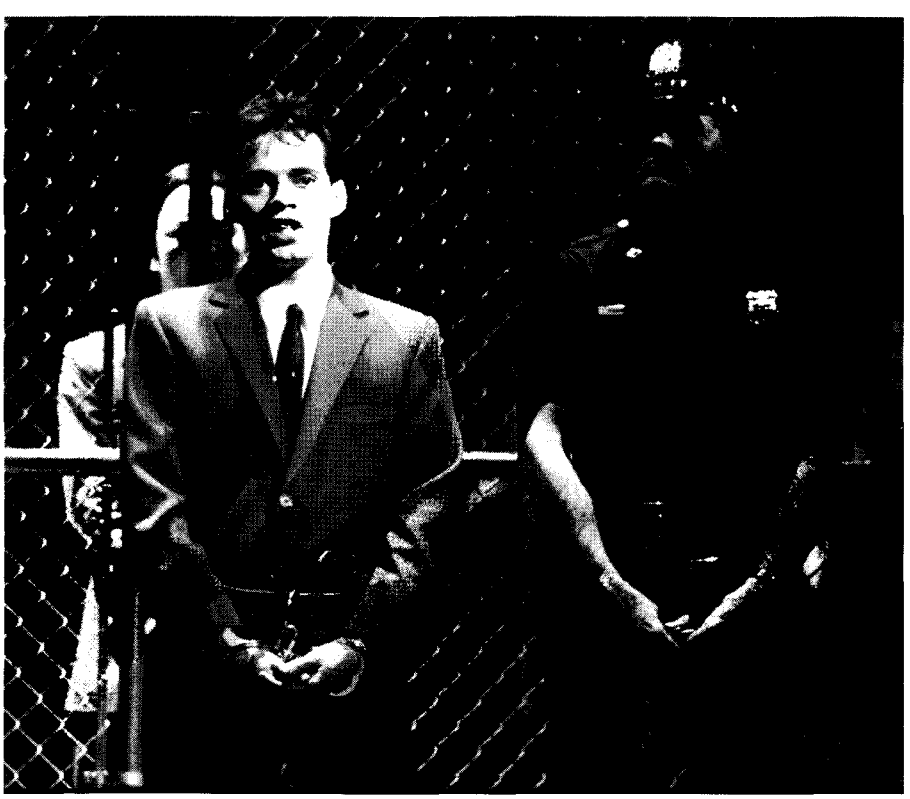
ANATOMY OF A CALAMITY

'Capeman' & 'Black Snow'

A director has but one task," the director Tyrone Guthrie once remarked; "to make each rehearsal so amusing that the actors will look forward to the next one." While most directors (and actors) would probably disagree, sometimes the making of a play intrigues us more than the play itself.

Witness, for example, the premonition that heralded Paul Simon's musical *The Capeman*, which opened in January and closed in March. As the first theatrical venture of the celebrated songwriter, this biography of the murderer Salvador Agrón attracted notice from its inception. Other celebrities who came on board brought still greater visibility: Derek Walcott, collaborator on book and lyrics, is a Nobel Prize-winning poet; *Capeman*'s leads—Ruben Blades and Marc Anthony—are superstars in the world of salsa music.

Nevertheless, noting that Simon's production team had little experience with Broadway's harsh realities, pessimists glimpsed trouble ahead. The cynicism increased when Simon dismissed his first two directors and hired as replacement *Capeman*'s choreographer, Mark Morris, who had never directed a musical before. A November article in the *New York Times Magazine* ruthlessly documented Simon's micromanaging perfectionism. When the premier was postponed three weeks, when veteran directors were rumored to be offering advice, and when one of those (Jerry Zaks) was hired for a last-minute overhaul, gossip flew. As relatives of Agrón's victims lined up demonstrations to protest what they saw as glorification of a murderer, the situation began to resemble a soap opera custom-tailored for readers of *Variety*.



Ultimately, it couldn't be helped: *The Capeman* had to open. Audiences who ascended to the Marquis Theater—a soulless auditorium situated inside a hotel—witnessed a failure of breathtaking proportions. Simon and his colleagues had taken a story that was, at best, fleetingly dramatic, and systematically deflated it. A misshapen script, parked like a tank across the inroad of our sympathy, made Agrón by turns inscrutable and boring. Lyrics of stunning banality—"It's the time of year when I shop for clothes" is the text of one rousing chorus—might belie Walcott's contribution, were his name not on the program. Fault rests with the interpreters, as well as the creators: betrayed by shoddy direction, the actors stood awkwardly on the stage, hands by their sides. With the exception of the odd set, the highlight of this embarrassing production was Simon's score—innocuous global village pop with a Latin twist.

Acts 1 and 2 foundered in different ways, deftly thwarting the talents of both Anthony, who played Agrón aged sixteen to twenty, and Blades, who played him as an adult. Agrón emerged as a cryptic figure in act 1, which sampled his early years in Puerto Rico, his family's relocation to New York City, his initiation into a gang, and the senseless murder in a basketball court of two teen-age boys. Bad pacing obscured the character; overemphasized anecdotes from Agrón's childhood—when he apparently had no personality—led to the disastrously rushed sequence in New York, which glided over his delinquency and the murder without revealing his feelings, qualms, or understanding of the world.

Making the character still more remote, the script stressed destiny over free will. In an initial scene, a *santero* (Ray De La Paz) sees crime in the future of seven-year-old Agrón (Evan Jay Newman). Later, the onstage presence of Blades, as the repentant older criminal looking back on youthful errors, underscored the irreversible quality of the past. By hinting that Agrón was passively submitting to destiny, rather than acting as a moral being, and by giving

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us the *Cliffs Notes* version of his adolescence, the play effectively squashed the drama of the murder scene. The cheery do-wop music that accompanied the stabbing didn't help either.

Convicted of the killing, the sixteen-year-old Agrón is sentenced to death. Nelson Rockefeller commutes the sentence, with the unfortunate consequence that *Capeman* has an act 2. Jumping ahead seventeen years, the musical slows down enough to acquaint us with the wiser, self-educated protagonist, whose adventures have limited interest at this point because he is locked in prison. An epistolary romance with a beautiful Native American leads nowhere. A quixotic dream sequence, whose billowing pastels give the stage the feverish look of a psychedelic rock video, tug dutifully at the theme of freedom but trail off. Finally, the reformed prisoner is released, but the play fizzles to an end so anticlimactic it seemed like a practical joke.

A few noteworthy visual images did buoy above the tide of blunders. In particular, set designer Bob Crowley devised a remarkable mural to represent the prison: the heads and shoulders of identical mannequins jutted out of a white wall, so that viewers felt they were looking down on a jail cafeteria. Other compositions, though interesting, were less effective: a statuesque, blue-robed figure representing the biblical Lazarus (Nestor Sanchez), whom Agrón apparently revered, wandered onstage periodically, to no metaphorical purpose. And the directors erred greatly in incorporating historical newsreels which made the play's own action seem all the more vague and lifeless.

How did so many distinguished artists concoct such a calamity? The spectacle at the Marquis Theater, and the preceding press reports, suggest that Simon put too little faith in his collaborators; *The Capeman*'s score seems to have been written first, and the drama patched in afterwards. Staging a play, and especially a musical, requires the coordination of talents: if the production team does not work in concert, giving the proper weight to direction, script, design, and all other elements, they risk producing an ungainly mess.

A marvelous satire of theatrical collaborations recently lit up the Judith Anderson Theater, when the Gilgamesh Theatre Group mounted the play *Black Snow*. Adapted by Keith Reddin from the comic novel by Mikhail Bulgakov, *Black Snow* depicts the woes of a fledging Soviet writer who turns his epic into a play for a prestigious theater company. Bulgakov's writings, including his masterpiece, *The Master and Margarita*, were repeatedly banned by the Stalinist regime; his relationship with the theatrical establishment was discordant as well. Drawing on his experiences with the Moscow Art Theater, he packed *Black Snow* with grotesque bureaucrats and vicious artists, but his novel still captures the intoxicating atmosphere of the theater world.

In an exuberant production directed by Ralph Buckley, The Gilgamesh Theatre Group hit on just the right mixture of hilarious, deadpan comedy and Kafkaesque foreboding. Popping on and off a frugal set whose red surfaces recalled constructivist art, the superb cast juggled several roles apiece (except Christopher Duva, who played the hapless Sergei throughout). Among the brilliant characterizations were John Hines as a business manager with a crazed look in his eye, and Greg Stuhr as the mysterious nighttime visitor who vows to publish Sergei's novel if three words—"apocalypse," "archangel," and "devil"—are deleted.

Sergei suffers when an imperious director (based on the legendary Konstantin Stanislavsky—the role was played by Sal Mistretta) rewrites the play so as to eliminate all the gun shots. He suffers when weeks of rehearsal are frittered away on acting exercises involving imaginary bouquets.

And yet, despite everything, he still feels drawn to thespian life, "pinned to it like a beetle to a piece of cork." The mystery of the theater transcends the squabbles and intrigue of individuals; it exhilarates, tempting initiates and the foolhardy to continue staging plays, no matter how tempestuous the process. □

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Socrates didn't have tenure

Cultivating Humanity
A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education
Martha C. Nussbaum
Harvard University Press, $26, 328 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

Martha Nussbaum, one of our most distinguished philosophers and classical scholars, has fashioned a "report card" on contemporary liberal education: not failure, certainly not a "gentleman's" C (politically incorrect), perhaps not A+, but very much alive and lively in an astonishing array of academic settings. Her reassurance about the vitality of liberal arts is particularly striking coming as a *classical* defense of liberal education because it would seem that it is precisely the *classical* that has been eroded by contemporary interest in non-Western culture, African-American studies, women's studies, and gay studies. To external critics, none of these educational turns, fashions, or fads look at all like the traditional classical curriculum, for example, "the Great Books" (from Sophocles to Shakespeare to— well, maybe T.S. Eliot). Nussbaum assures us that despite apparent change the *spirit* of liberal education remains strong.

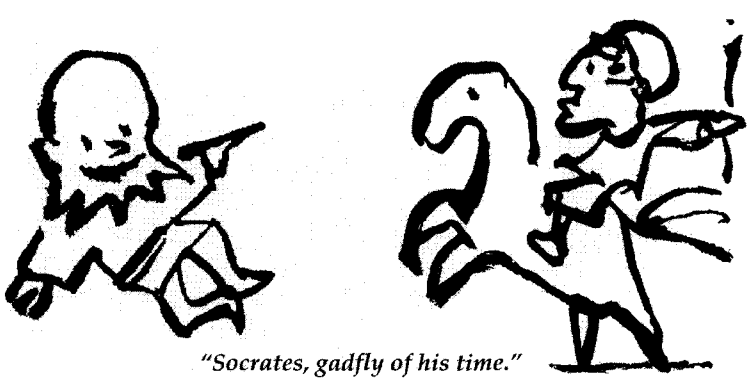
Unlike most philosophers setting out to prove a case, Nussbaum actually cites empirical evidence. She has personally tracked the practices of liberal arts teachers in such varied settings (among others) as Bentley College (essentially a business school), Notre Dame (a Catholic university), Brigham Young (Mormon), Randolph-Macon (small residential), University of Pittsburgh (large, state-related institution with significant commuter population). At each of these institutions, she salutes individuals and/or programs which challenge students to think openly and creatively, to resist the "idols of the marketplace," to make up their own minds. The new—supposedly anticlassical—curricula do exactly what one hopes the liberal arts will accomplish: liberation of the human mind.

That at least is one version of the liberal arts. In his meticulous and indispensable study of the history of the liberal arts tradition (*Orators & Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*), Bruce Kimball delineates two strikingly different ideologies of "the liberal arts." The oratorical liberal arts emphasize the tradition, recovery of a civic value. The *philosophical* liberal arts opt for the *critical*, continual re-examination of inculcated cultural assumptions. Kimball distinguishes an *artes liberales* tradition (orators) and the "liberal free" tradition (philosophers). It is the "liberal free" tradition that Nussbaum finds healthy and well on campus.

Nussbaum's nominal hero, representing the "liberal free" liberal arts, is Socrates. Chapter 1 is titled "Socratic Self-Examination" and the teachers and programs singled out for praise in one way or another replicate the persistent questioning of the great Athenian "gadfly." "The central task of education...is to confront the passivity of the student, challenging the mind to take charge of its own thought." To that end, "tradition is one foe of Socratic reason." So much for right-wing critics who think that "liberal arts" is just all those dead, white, European males so long (too long) revered by the "classical curriculum." The other "foes" of Socrates are those left-wing progressives who view "reason" as the claptrap invention of male hierarchy. Nussbaum is firm in upholding universal reason as the great device for the critical appraisal essential to the liberal arts (in their liberal-free guise).

I am deeply sympathetic to Nussbaum's views, and I offer hearty congratulations to all those present-day gadflies out on the front-line classrooms, yet there are limitations to her Socratic overlay on higher education. Socrates is never without his ironies! I point to two significant ironies: Socrates' distrust of "professors"; Socrates' civic piety.

It is not incidental that Socrates practiced his critical art in the market place, in the gymnasium, and at drunken feasts. It was Plato who invented the (our) academy, a sheltered spot for philosophers to practice their trade. Socrates believed that in the search for wisdom the best he could do was confess his own ignorance while querying merchants, generals, poets, religious prophets and what-



"Socrates, gadfly of his time."

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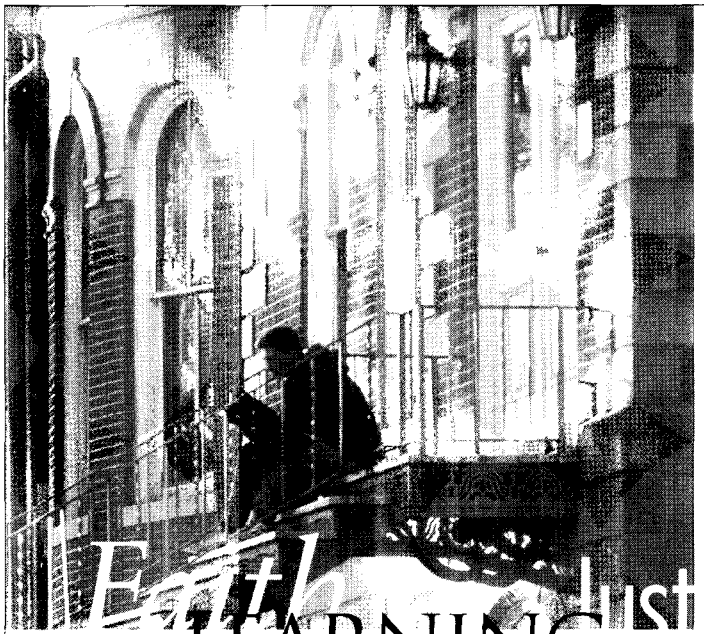
all for any scraps of wisdom they might have come upon. What Socrates seems to have distrusted most were the Sophists, those who professed to have a knowledge or skill which they could pass on for a fee to willing pupils. Socrates would be amazed—probably amused—that there are Socratic-like *professors*, that is, certified and tenured gadflies.

It is also not incidental that when push came to hemlock, Socrates refused to go into exile. In the *Crito* he imagines the Athenian laws speaking to him as the mother and father who shaped him and whom he could not now flaunt by abandoning the city. Nussbaum's text shapes Socrates in terms of the later Stoics who advocated an ideal of the universal citizenship of reason and humanity beyond the confines of Athens or Rome.

One problem with Socrates plus higher education is that for us higher education is through and through *institutionalized*. Higher education is the Academy—a place set apart with professional standards, tenure, credentialing, certification, and so on, none of which makes much sense in the Socratic life-search for wisdom. Are *professors* specially qualified, more than poets, politicians, or people of practice to offer a "guide to life"? A second and contrary paradox is that Socrates does not seem (at least in the *Crito* nor in his life practice) to have been a proto-Stoic universalist. To be sure, he was critical of Athenian torpor, but he seemed to believe that the problem was not discovering the truth of reason above, but in waking up the embedded pieties of the existing *polis*. In sum, Nussbaum's Socratic ideal—noble as it is—either does not sit easily with the institutional reality of higher education, *or* Socrates' allegiance of a sort to an embedded civic wisdom does not sit well with Nussbaum's fundamental critical transcendence of tradition in the realm of reason. We should bless our Socrateses in and out of our colleges and universities, but the issues of higher-education-as-institution go beyond (or below) the great gadfly. □

Dennis O'Brien *is the author, most recently, of* All the Essential Half-Truths about Higher Education *(University of Chicago Press).*



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ALL EXPENSES PAID

Spending
(A Utopian Divertimento)
Mary Gordon
Scribner, $24, 299 pp.

Robert H. Bell

Mary Gordon's new novel is immensely engaging fun, a delightful romp by an author distinguished for narratives of rigorous self-denial, harrowing disillusionment, and painful self-discovery. If anyone deserves a holiday from conscience and an interlude with the pleasure principle, it's the writer of *Final Payments*, *The Company of Women*, and the recent memoir, *The Shadow Man*. As its subtitle suggests, *Spending* locates us in the land of make-believe, what if, and once-upon-a-time.

Gordon's premise is delicious: what if a fifty-year-old painter, divorced mother of twin girls, were offered patronage, and much more, all her heart desires, by a wealthy, sexy, adoring benefactor? Thus "B" presents himself, irresistibly, to the dedicated, talented Monica Szabo, our narrator and heroine. Monica knows very clearly what she wants and rather less clearly what she is, an incurable narcissist. Floating into intimacy with B, she thinks, "You can't possibly lose. He's watching you and you're watching yourself. And you know there's nothing you can do that he won't like. Your body weighs nothing. It would be quite easy to fly up, and float away. He would watch you, flying up, floating away, not at all surprised because the whole time he'd thought you were miraculous." *Spending* is "The Unbelievable Lightness of Being."

Gordon magically releases Monica from the restrictions of reality and cleverly reverses conventional patterns. Instead of being the objectified object of the male gaze, Monica stars in her own show. She is the maker, he is the model. What she creates is, like Monica herself, outrageous and irresistible, a series of postcoital variations on classic versions of Christ's passion (her theory being that the Christs of the old masters represented *le petit mort*). Hence the title of her series, "Spent Men," and the punning title of Gordon's novel.

B views Monica as miraculous. "I think you're a very, very good painter. I think one day you might be great." "When you were younger did you think you looked like Hedy Lamarr?" When she momentarily worries that she could afford to lose ten pounds, doting B responds, "My God, you don't know much, for all you think you know. Don't you know the incredible power of what you've got there? Of the appeal of that endless responsiveness, and all its variety?" Even his gesture, "you don't know much," yields to a paean of praise. To hear such stuff is a major motive to fall in love.

But B, love-struck, blind to cellulite and sag, not to mention his beloved's vanity and egocentricity, isn't the only character who feels Monica's "incredible power" and "appeal." A former student presents Monica with a bouquet. Her sister Helena says to B, "We have something else in common. We both think my sister's a great painter." Viewing Monica's new series, "Spent Men," Monica's agent exclaims, "It's the most exciting work I've seen in a long time. I knew the idea was great but the execution is a triumph." Monica has an insatiable need for praise, an urgent, incessant throb. She's got it half-right when she comments, "Maybe I have trouble accepting praise because my hunger for it is so boundless." She's closer to the artist's dirty little secret when she admits what she'd *really* like to hear: "Every other living painter's work is shit. Yours, only yours, is gold."

I found Monica a fully realized, compelling, intriguing figure. She describes the process of painting and works of art with vivid, passionate fervor. She's very nearly as persuasive depicting really good sex as she is describing Vermeer. And she is persistently smart and funny: "Nothing marks the death of desire like the moment when you find yourself thinking that the ex-wife had a point."

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Another of Monica's endearing qualities is a tenderness for humankind, including males.

A vibrant novel, *Spending* has limited ambitions and effects, and it eventually runs out of steam. Monica's benefactor B is insubstantial and flagrantly fantastic: a rock of support, a geyser of praise, a faithful, worshipful lover, amusing but never threatening, a Wall Street futures trader who wittily quotes T. S. Eliot, and who is ready, willing, and able to drop everything and serve Monica's purposes. Financing her project and modeling her subjects, he is her sugar daddy, spending lover, and savior. When his herniated disk requires Monica's ministration and some erotic accommodation, B is only temporarily grumpy and the problem just disappears. If only! So full of loving-kindness and devoted patience is B that he is an apt model of Christ.

Monica seems too abundantly endowed, the recipient of excessive authorial affection and regard, or perhaps an idealized, privileged surrogate for the author. (She's a wonderful synthesis of Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*). Monica is not only romantically and artistically enabled but blissfully freed from the exigencies of reality. Swimming naked, Monica thinks, "Movement is utterly easy; you're working against nothing, what you're in wants you to move in it, with it, it offers no resistance, only help." Encountering no resistance enables floating and fantasy but limits fiction and life. Without more intractability—vulnerabilities, inconsistency, orneriness—there's inadequate conflict between what Yeats terms "the perfection of the life or of the work." *Spending* romanticizes artistic experience without studying the costs of artistic commitment. Monica's adventures are amusing and entertaining but not richly dramatic. Still, if you're looking for an artful indulgence of appetite, and a joyous spring fling, *Spending* is your ticket. Soon, I predict, to be a major motion picture. □

Robert H. Bell *is William R. Kenan Professor of English at Williams College.*

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MOVING THE MASSES

The Hitler of History
John Lukacs
Alfred A. Knopf, $25, 316 pp.

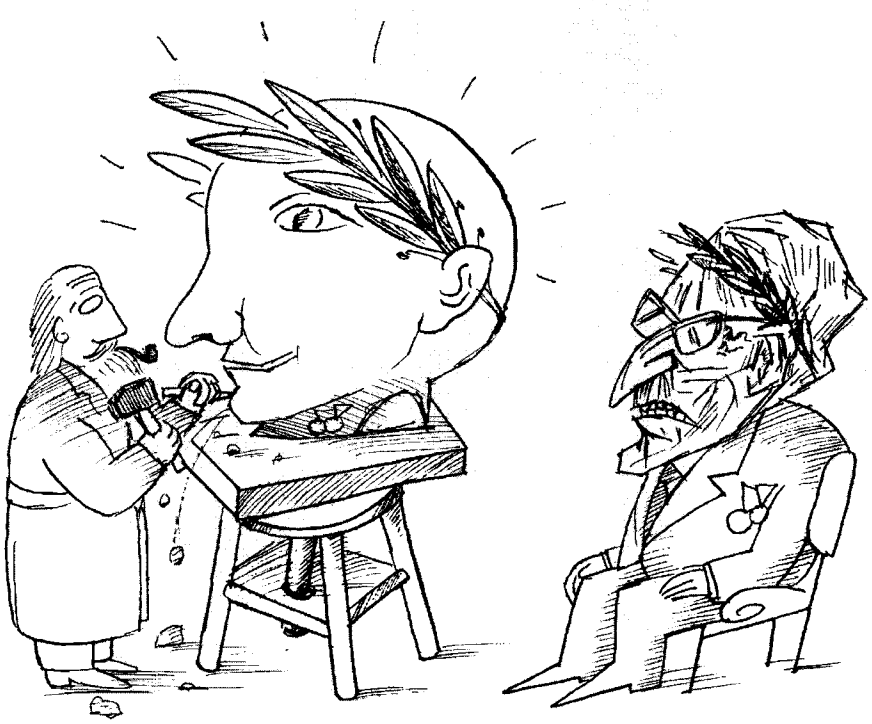
John T. McGreevy

Adolf Hitler is the most important figure of the last one hundred years, claims historian John Lukacs, and an evaluation of Hitler's biographers is in order.

The first claim is at least debatable. Mao and the leaders of the Chinese revolution surely transformed the lives of more people, and the regime he began continues to shape the politics and economics of the world's most populous hemisphere. The consolidation of the Soviet revolution in the hands of Josef Stalin, and Stalin's ability to withstand the Nazi assault during World War II, ensured the extension of the cold war into the farthest reaches of the globe.

But these parlor games do not diminish Lukacs's second point, that Hitler's life requires sustained reflection. *The Hitler of History* is precisely that, a reasoned survey of over one hundred Hitler biographies in several European languages. The book displays astonishing erudition, and a philosophical acuteness rare in historical inquiry.

The basic story remains startling: a failed Austrian architect assumes dictatorial powers in one of Europe's best educated and most "civilized" nations ten years after a desultory beer hall putsch lands him in jail. Under his direction, the German economy thrives, and he wins adulation of an unprecedented sort. By 1938, Germans are marrying and having children at an extraordinary rate, a demographic marker of social confidence all the more remarkable when contrasted with falling birthrates and economic indicators in most Western nations. Had Hitler died in 1938, Lukacs observes, agreeing with biographer Joachim Fest, he would have been remembered by most Germans as the fulfiller (*"der Vollender"*) of Germany's destiny. Seven years later Hitler committed suicide, but only after unleashing the most bloody of all wars, and spurring the most horrific of all genocides.



For Lukacs, the Hitler phenomenon demonstrates that nationalism — not communism, not socialism, not mass consumption — proved to be the "principal political reality of the twentieth century." Hitler was only "its most extreme representative." Marxian faith (or hope) that workers had no country weakened before the eagerness of workers to slaughter each other in World War I, and collapsed completely in the face of the Nazi regime. That Communist regimes survived into the late twentieth century testifies either to their ability to harness nationalist energy (Cuba) or to the military support of the Soviet Union (the German Democratic Republic, until 1989). Nationalism, too, meshed with Hitler's Judeophobia. Jews threatened the German nation, Hitler persistently stressed, and must be eradicated from it. His last testament, dictated a few hours before his death, pleads with Germans not to allow Jews to return to their midst.

Hitler's achievement (using the term in its most neutral sense) is in this way different from that of Caesar or Napoleon. He lived in a populist age, distant from the more hierarchical, ordered societies of the past. He had an uncanny ability to tell powerful Germans—industrialists, church leaders, politicians — what they wanted to hear, while building a base of support that would eventually allow him to eliminate all opponents. "To lead," Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, "means to be able to move the masses." When in September 1944, the government called for sixteen-year-old Germans to volunteer for service, 96 percent promptly did so. Concentration camp officials continued to slaughter Jews long after the outcome of the war was obvious. German workers professed confidence in the Führer even as Soviet troops encircled Berlin.

Given this view of the Hitler phe-

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nomenon, Lukacs is understandably wary of nationalism's power. Patriotism, he maintains, is rooted in the land or the history of a particular country, but nationalism depends upon a myth of the people, a myth that often has exclusionary implications. Patriots appreciate other cultures, while nationalists rank them. Hitler was a nationalist, not a patriot. At times Lukacs worries that patriotism may be irrelevant in a democratic age, that nationalism is a form of Tocqueville's democratic tyranny.

This distinction seems to me forced. Populist nationalism has an often unseemly history, but Soviet, British, and American nationalisms proved more than a match for their Nazi counterpart. And the specifically American belief that the nation was uniquely devoted to social equality also laid the groundwork for successful civil rights protests during the 1960s. Southern segregationists thought of themselves as nationalists and patriots, too, of course, but at that moment more Americans saw their national ideals reflected through Martin Luther King, Jr., than through Bull Connor. Indeed, our recent inability to further social reform with appeals to national ideals—note the health-care debate of 1993–94—may signal American nationalism's waning power.

Perhaps a more precise way of making Lukacs's point is to emphasize his rejection of a particular kind of nationalism, one that in effect becomes religious. This sort of nationalism fulfills spiritual and emotional needs by rallying partisans to an intense hatred of supposed national enemies. (One of Lukacs's most telling, and discouraging, examples is an allusion to a 1942 debate at the German Catholic bishops' conference, at which some priests suggested segregating Jewish Catholics into special communion services.) Lukacs's warnings about this kind of nationalism, as exemplified by the career of Adolf Hitler, are salutary, a reminder of how idolatry of nation can fatally limit our moral imagination. □

John T. McGreevy, *the author of* Parish Boundaries *(University of Chicago Press), teaches history at the University of Notre Dame.*

Tantur Rector Search Announcement

Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies in Israel invites nominations and applications for the position of rector. Tantur, located just outside Jerusalem on the road to Bethlehem, is a center for theological inquiry, Christian ecumenical studies, and interreligious dialogue between Christians and those of other world faiths, especially Jews and Muslims. The institute, jointly founded by Pope Paul VI and the University of Notre Dame, is a residential center for visiting scholars interested in the ecumenical and interreligious dimensions of scriptural, theological and pastoral studies. It also offers three-month sessions in continuing education for parish clergy, religious teachers and other church workers, as well as semesters of international study for undergraduates. Since its creation in 1971, over 3,500 Orthodox, Protestants, Anglicans and Roman Catholics have participated in the programs.

The rector is the academic and administrative leader of the institute, and is responsible for the continuing development of its ecumenical and interreligious mission. With the assistance of the vice-rector and administrator, the rector oversees the educational programs and conferences, the finances, and the staff, and develops cooperative relationships with appropriate academic and religious persons to further the aims of the institute, both in the local and international arenas.

The successful candidate will possess significant experience in educational administration and a distinguished record of academic accomplishment in the area of biblical theology, ecumenical and interreligious studies, or related fields. Excellent management, communication, interpersonal and cooperative skills are necessary qualifications. A doctorate is preferred, and a working knowledge of Hebrew and/or Arabic would be strong assets in the position.

Nominations and applications will be accepted until May 1, 1998. Applicants should provide a letter of introduction, a current resume and four references. Applications should be submitted to:

Tantur Rector Search Committee
c/o Rev. Mark L. Poorman, C.S.C.
134 Hayes-Healy Center
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556

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Romancing the Stone

The only other woman on the crew speaks
beautiful Spanish. An amateur *mineralista*,
she loves rocks as I do, calls them the story
of creation. Sometimes on a break, the foreman
brings us chunks of patterned jasper
or dusty quartz as we try
to decode the ancient narrative together.

As we push the new interstate
through layers of limestone, basalt, chert,
each blast raises pulverized eons to curtain
the sun. The road cut exposes Mesozoic epics,
a cross-sectioned registry of time
out of sight until now. She and I talk of how
the text is set to music, written
in the mountain's opened volume, systematic
staff lines, chords waiting to be played. Daily
we find fragment lyrics in the core drill.

Our sandwiches are seasoned with the grit
of life. We breathe atomized fossils
of early temperate zone trees, cycads,
teleost fishes. The foreman
calls these Rockies a quick scraping
of God's boots once passing.

My day off, I leave her sitting with him,
gazing at a seam of chalcedony over the rims
of their coffee cups as if reading Cervantes.
I climb a peak half-a-mile south, topping
a ridge the highway will tunnel:
A parade of virgin conifers celebrates
their *fin de siècle*. Viridian shadows *adagio*
on outcropped red agate and trombone slides
of shale, each foothold measured in grace notes.

Every sense attuned, celebration
in my lungs, joy is an *obbligato* graphed on sky.
Long *legato* passages echo blue. I reach the top
of the scale, hearing the treble of triumph.

Glenna Holloway

Advanced Writing Class under Mildred Adams

We students knew she flew
not as witches do
on potions and at night,
but right in front of our eyes
while seeming not to move.

Her eyes gave her away:
that clarity of blue overlay
on Attic gray, enameled
by gliding near the sun
while we would run
beneath her shadow
losing ground
but gaining wind.

We couldn't write
like E.B. White or Forster,
yet occasionally we penned
a phrase that raised us
above the commonplace
and blazed into the wind
she was and brought to us.

I say she flew.
Perhaps I should have said
she walked on air
and thought our feet
of clay could too.
And so we believed
we would, and so
even in our wooden words
we came to love
the air she moved.

Jane McClellan

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TOUGH GUY

Cagney
John McCabe
Alfred A. Knopf, $29.95, 439 pp.

James T. Fisher

It may be some while before biographies of urban Irish-Americans from impoverished families escape the long shadow of Frank McCourt's 1996 memoir, *Angela's Ashes*, which has apparently won millions of readers over to its central claim: "nothing can compare with the Irish version" of a deprived childhood. Yet if James Cagney's early film career is any indication, Hollywood had reached the same conclusion more than six decades earlier, when the street-toughened New York Irishman became virtually synonymous with urban pathology in films like *The Public Enemy* (1931) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938). Cagney himself struggled for decades against such typecasting, in his life as well as his art. As John McCabe shows in the celebrity biography *Cagney*, the actor's most brutal film roles still conveyed a sympathetic dimension that moviegoers found highly appealing.

The "shiftless loquacious alcoholic father" of *Angela's Ashes* is present in *Cagney* as well, in the person of James Francis Cagney, a sometime barkeep who moved his growing family from Manhattan's East Village (where his second son, James Cagney, Jr., was born in 1899), to Yorkville, on the Upper East Side. Years later Cagney poignantly recalled that his father bore an "incredible resemblance" to Jackie Gleason, but his "funny roaring" led only to death at age forty-one. McCabe's narrative, however, eschews the lugubrious *Angela's Ashes* model in favor of a much more upbeat trajectory; a sensible choice in light of the success ethic instilled in the five surviving Cagney children by their Irish-Norwegian mother. Two of his brothers became physicians, and Cagney himself briefly studied at Columbia University before his theatrical gifts were unwrapped in 1918 in the drama program at the Lenox Hill Settlement House.

McCabe, a professional actor and theater educator, vividly portrays the vaudeville milieu which provided Cagney the vehicle to develop his imposing gifts for dance and physical comedy. In 1922 he married Frances Willard "Willie" Vernon, a chorus girl he met while appearing in "Ritz Girls of 19 and 22." Following a stint running a dance school with Willie in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Cagney returned to the stage and was "discovered" by film mogul Jack Warner playing a bootlegger in *Penny Arcade*. Cagney traveled to Hollywood in 1930 and appeared in *Sinner's Holiday* for Warner Brothers. He went on to star in over sixty films before retiring in 1961.

Cagney exceeds the typical standards of celebrity biography because McCabe is fully attentive to the many dimensions of his subject's artistry. He isolates a shot from Cagney's first film, for example, in which he "almost simultaneously expresses fear, anxiety, defiance, and incredulity. It is an acting *tour de force* one would expect of a veteran actor, not from a young song-and-dance man recently come to acting." McCabe shows how Cagney's hands "function in the way a dancer uses his body." In discussing the otherwise forgettable *Great Guy* (1936), McCabe notes that "in moments of stress his right hand becomes a lithe snake's head that writhes and lunges in anger, changing with the sudden lift of an admonitory finger to make its own emphatic, intimidating statement."

Cagney deeply resented Jack Warner and the studio system that made him a star but confined him to hoodlum roles. In 1942 Cagney and his manager-brother Bill launched Cagney Productions, an independent film company affiliated with United Artists. Bill Cagney explained that his brother had been "typed as exactly the kind of guy our mother had tried to push us farthest away from. So for ten years Jimmy makes five pictures a year and all along the same Warner Brothers formula—Jimmy is a heel for eight reels, then clean him up in the ninth." Cagney's audi-

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ence, however, was not interested in seeing him portray a mild-mannered, small-town newspaper editor (in Cagney Productions' *Johnny Come Lately*, 1943). As the critic Lincoln Kirstein astutely observed in 1932, Cagney "creates his own type." He "is the first definitely metropolitan figure to become national, as opposed to the suburban national figure of a few years ago, or of the farmer before that."

Kirstein also noted that "Cagney is mick-Irish," a handy attribute when it came time for Cagney to portray one of his idols, George M. Cohan, in *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, but a mixed blessing for an artist who quickly grew tired of his street *persona*. McCabe, who also ghostwrote the actor's 1976 autobiography, *Cagney by Cagney*, provides ample hints of Cagney's ambivalent view toward his heritage and early life, but he does not fully explore his paradoxical, even contrary nature. The city boy greatly preferred life on his various farms in upstate New York and Martha's Vineyard. His best friends were the actors Pat O'Brien and Frank McHugh, but he bristled when the Boys Club they founded with Spencer Tracy in the late 1930s (and which did include such non-Hibernians as Ralph Bellamy) was tagged by columnists as the "Irish Mafia." After being robbed of two dollars by a priest who failed to appear for "a simple prayer service" following his father's death, Cagney boycotted the church for life, but he later told gossip columnist Hedda Hopper that "for him Christ's life and words were ever meaningful as guides for his life and that a man neglected spirituality at serious risk to his completeness as a human."

Cagney and his wife lived on a socialist commune in New Jersey in the mid-1920s; in the early thirties, in response to a friend's questionnaire, he listed Joseph Stalin as his favorite living person (and England as his favorite "other country"). McCabe reveals that Bill Cagney convinced his brother to accept the lead role in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* as "an antidote to his so-called overliberal reputation," but McCabe provides only anecdotal accounts of the actor's political views, which shifted abruptly rightward in the post-Roosevelt era. Finally, the man devoted to memories of his poor but happy family adopted, with Willie, two children in 1940 and promptly relegated them to a separate home on the Cagneys' Cold Water Canyon property, where they were raised by a housekeeper. McCabe blames Willie Cagney for this bizarre decision and the great unhappiness that ensued for the children, but it is another jarring note in a biography determined to maintain its celebratory tone.

Pat O'Brien called his friend James Cagney a "faraway fella," and so he remains. It may be that Cagney's struggle to reconcile his early life with his stardom holds the key to his appeal, but until that issue is probed more deeply, *Cagney* will serve as a rich entertainment. □

James T. Fisher *is the author, most recently, of* Dr. America: The Lives of Thomas A. Dooley, 1927–61 *(University of Massachusetts Press).*

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NOT THE WHOLE STORY

Our Sunday Visitor's Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine
Edited by Russell Shaw
Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., $39.95, 751 pp.

Joseph A. Komonchak

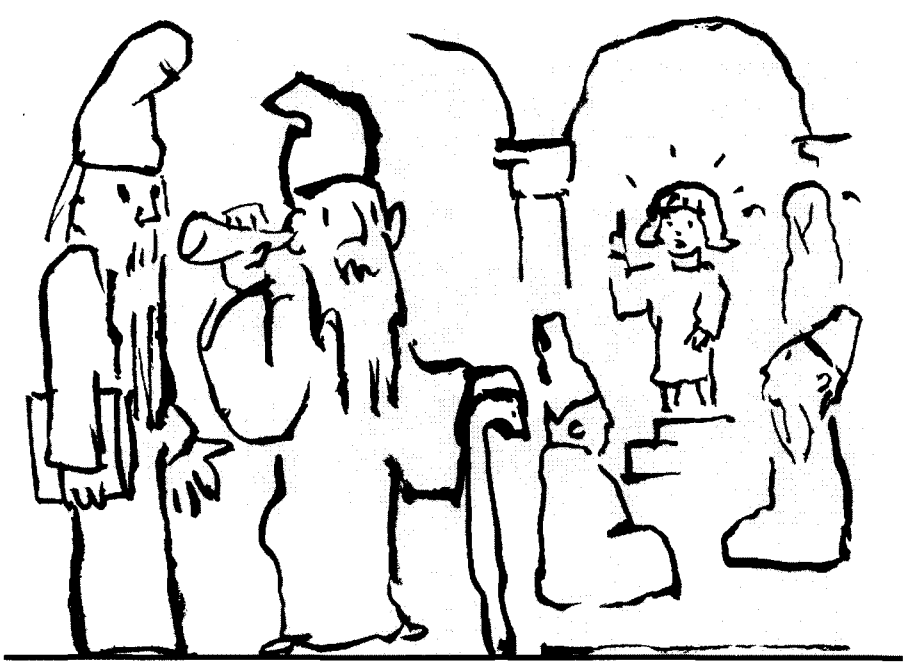
This volume is offered as a complement to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* by expanding on some points of doctrine in the latter, integrating scattered material, and providing historical background and pastoral insights. The dust jacket says that it was "reviewed by the Ad Hoc Committee on the *Catechism* and found to be consistent and in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*."

Having myself edited a theological dictionary, I am aware of the difficulties of such an enterprise, which begin with the selection of topics, decisions about relative length and prominence and the choice of authors, and end with having to deal with the varying quality of articles submitted, differences in perspective and position, etc. The editor and publisher may be congratulated for having produced a generally well-integrated, moderately priced, and handsomely printed volume, mercifully free of typographical errors.

Forty authors, most of them Americans and theologians, contributed articles on topics from "Abortion" to "Worship." The articles vary greatly in length and technical quality, the longer ones being signed, and are provided with minimal bibliographies and, usually, with references to the appropriate passages in the *Catechism*. Short of reproducing the index of the *Catechism*, the editor had to make choices. Where the reason for these choices is evident they usually seem related, first, to subjects of some concern and even controversy in the United States and/or, second, to prominent themes in the magisterium of Pope John Paul II, whose writings are so abundantly cited that the volume might also be read as a companion to his teachings.

While titled an encyclopedia of *doctrine*, this volume contains articles also on some Catholic practices, devotions, and institutions; the criterion for the choice of these topics and of others is not always evident. Prominence in the *Catechism* obviously plays some role. Contemporary relevance is evident in articles on Animals and the Environment; on Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Contraception, Genetic Experimentation, Prenatal Diagnosis, Reproductive Technologies, and Euthanasia; on Consequentialism, Proportionalism, and Teleological Ethics; on the Fatherhood of God, Women, Ecclesial and Social Roles of, and Women, Ordination of; it is less clearly the explanation of the articles on Diabolical Possession, Divination, Freemasonry, Magic, New Age, and Theosophy, which also are hardly major concerns in the *Catechism*. World religions receive attention: Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Taoism. Anglicanism, and Orthodoxy are separately treated, but a single article on Protestantism suffices for other Christian groups; the short entry on Ecumenism does not do justice either to the present pope or to Vatican II. Various "isms" are treated: Agnosticism, Atheism, Gnosticism, Jansenism, Manichaeism, Modernism, Quietism, Relativism, Subjectivism, but one would have to dig for other errors or heresies. Among philosophies one finds Neoplatonism, Phenomenology, and Process Theology, but not Aristotelianism and Platonism, never mind Hegelianism, Kantianism, and Marxism. Of the fathers and doctors of the church there are articles on only Augustine and Thomas, the latter, unfortunately, treated almost entirely as a philosopher. A surprising omission is any special treatment of psychology or of religious experience, the latter being a favored interest of the present pope.

The major theological topics are, of course, covered, at varying depths and with varying success. By far the best group of articles are those devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which stand out for their treatment of the Bible and the history of doctrines and devotions and for the balance of their presentation. They are a model that one wishes had been followed by other articles on major themes, which either entirely omit or too rapidly pass over historical developments and often simply ignore key questions about the use of the Bible and challenges posed



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by modern science, history, and philosophy. The articles devoted to the liturgy are also generally well done.

The treatment of the Christian God is left in unintegrated form in two articles, one largely philosophical ("God") and the other theological ("Trinity"). The many articles on Jesus Christ are examples of what we used to call dogmatic theology, with few bows to history, ancient or modern; for example, the article "Jesus Christ, Life of" discusses the mysteries of his life, with scant reference to his time, place, culture, or teachings or to the latest wave of interest in the historical Jesus and the theological questions it raises. While three articles covering nine columns are devoted to Faith, less than one column each was thought to suffice for Hope and Charity. The articles on Church and State and on Religious Freedom nearly ignore the church's official practice and teaching from the Middle Ages to the Second Vatican Council.

The church is treated in many scattered articles, which often fall short of Vatican II and of the *Catechism* on several issues. For example, the idea of the one church as the communion of the many churches hardly appears; the regional dimensions of episcopacy and collegiality are underplayed; the relation between the Catholic church and other Christian churches is not addressed (the council's famous statement that the church of Christ "subsists in" the Catholic church is ignored); the article on membership in the church ignores the most important element in the council's description of full incorporation. The vindication of hierarchy and authority is a regular theme, with dissent the subject of an often oversimplified treatment in nineteen different places.

Many cross-references and a lengthy index will often help the reader supply for any want of completeness or accuracy in individual articles, although the admittedly unconventional character of the index does not make it very user-friendly. When looking for help on topics such as Love, Mass, Mortal Sin, Natural Law, Teresa of Avila, and Thomas Aquinas, it is frustrating to find the word "*passim*."

All in all, one might say that this volume reads Vatican II and, indeed, the whole doctrinal tradition in the light of the *Catechism*, the *Catechism* in the light of the teachings of John Paul II, and John Paul II in the light of certain perceptions of what is most needed in the United States today to oppose the "confusion, controversy, and dissent" which the editor thinks the *Catechism* was chiefly designed to address. If this is what you are looking for in an encyclopedia, this is, as the dust jacket promises, "a resource you can trust." You will not often find here much indication that other ways of ordering or stating Catholic doctrine, or even for reading and interpreting the tradition, Vatican II, the *Catechism*, and the magisterium of the present pope, and the contemporary situation, are possible—and trustworthy. □

The Reverend Joseph A. Komonchak *holds the John and Gertrude Hubbard Chair in Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America.*

GOING HOME

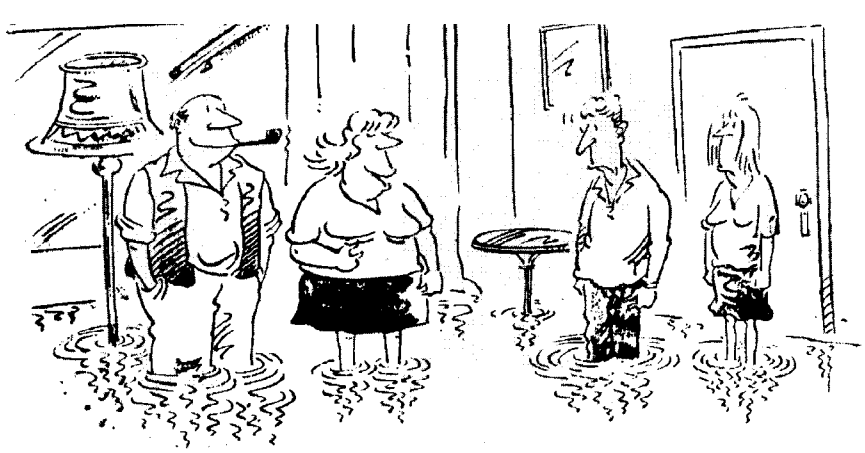
The Oxford History of Italy
George Holmes, editor
Oxford University Press, $45, 380 pp

Robert E. Proctor

The architect Charles Moore once said to my brother, also an architect, that "going to Italy is like going home." Those of us who make regular pilgrimages to Italy may feel the truth of Moore's observation, but do we understand it? What kind of home can this be, especially for those not of Italian origin?

The Oxford History of Italy offers some answers to that question. Composed of twelve chapters by as many different authors, most of whom teach in British universities, the volume covers the story of Italy from the reign of the Emperor Augustus to 1994, when the coalition government headed by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi collapsed. The chapters follow the fairly standard divisions of Italian history: classical antiquity beginning with Augustus; the Middle Ages (400–1250); the Renaissance (1250–1600); the Age of Baroque and Rococo (1600–1796); the *Risorgimento* (1796–1870); and the periods 1870–1915; 1915–45; and 1945–94. With only two exceptions, each historical period is covered by two chapters, one devoted to politics and society, the other to culture.

It is a real challenge to tell the full story of Italy well because the striking clarity of her cultural achievements is matched by the confusing complexity of her his-



"It's a little something we brought back from Venice."

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tory. That history is not only longer and richer than most other nations possess; it is characterized by greater political fragmentation. With the exception of the chapters on classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, which would be improved by more depth and better focus, the volume as a whole succeeds surprisingly well in creating a unified narrative. It is especially good at both highlighting the interplay among economics, politics, and culture during particular eras, and linking all the periods through the interrelated themes of politics and artistic creativity.

Political fragmentation contributed to artistic achievement, but would have been unable to do so were it not for another element of prime importance in the history of Italy: the interplay among conflicting inherited cultures. As the editor George Holmes puts it: "Of all European countries Italy has been the one with the richest and most varied cultural life, the result of the fact that there have been so many separate centers of art and thought, independent enough to preserve their own individuality. There were of course other reasons for the particular importance of Italy in the cultural history of Europe: the long ancient history of civilized life from the Etruscans and Greek settlers onwards, the legacy of Rome to the medieval world. It is impossible to imagine Italy without the backing of layer upon layer of ancient culture, which makes it quite different from other parts of Western Europe and gave Italian society an extra sophistication."

The essays that cover the Renaissance through the Baroque and Rococo periods discuss the particular genius of Italian culture, including the ways in which it was exported to other countries. These chapters exemplify both the depth of thinking and lucidity of narrative this book attains. The Renaissance spans the rise of independent communes and later city-states in northern and central Italy, the consolidation of the papacy, and the rise of large kingdoms in the south, all to be transformed again when the kings of France and Spain turned Italy into a battleground for their own armies in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Michael

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Mallett describes and analyzes these changes with masterly clarity in his essay on "Politics and Society 1250–1600." The cultural complement to Mallett's piece, George Holmes's chapter on "Renaissance Culture," explains why the Italian Renaissance remains one of the high points of human creativity and why going to Italy is like going home.

Around 1347 Petrarch wrote the *Secretum*, a dialogue between Saint Augustine, who argues that this life is merely a preparation for death, and Francis (Petrarch), who speaks of his attachment to earthly glory. The book ends with the debate unresolved: Petrarch was still attached to his love poetry and his desire for fame, and yet deeply worried that the monastic life, as Holmes puts it, was the true purpose of humanity. Holmes goes on to observe that in the *Secretum*, Petrarch "gave a picture of the underlying dilemma which was to run unsolved through the whole of Renaissance culture: How to reconcile the worldly purposes based on literary humanism derived from pagan Rome with the Christian self-denial and devotion to heaven preached by the religious orders. Both were strongly rooted movements in the Italian world . . . ." He points to the Florentines Dante, Marsilio Ficino, and Michelangelo, and to the Venetians Giovanni Bellini and Titian as further examples of the "divided thought-world, classical and Christian at the same time," of Italian Renaissance culture. Holmes argues that the problem of harmonizing the two was insoluble, but that the very tension, coming from the immense power of each tradition, created works of art—statues, paintings, poems, and churches—that made the Italian Renaissance one of the greatest creative periods in human history.

Stuart Woolf's chapter on "Italy 1600-1796," followed by Robert Oresko's companion essay "Culture in the Age of Baroque and Rococo," provide further answers to Italy's cultural predominance. These "Forgotten Centuries" of foreign domination, economic crises, the Counter Reformation, and the Enlightenment were also centuries of important public and private artistic patronage. Italians in all the arts attained new levels of craftsmanship and virtuosity, and began to work throughout Europe. Saint Petersburg, for example, was largely the work of Italian architects. Once again Italian culture, as it had in Roman times, became the common heritage of Europe.

Postmodernism has been characterized in part as ethical and cultural relativism, linked to a disregard for the past. The history of Italy shows the contrary: a deep, perhaps unavoidable regard for history, and a lived confrontation and amalgamation of two cultures that are anything but relativistic concerning questions of beauty and truth: classical antiquity and Christianity. Italy's attraction today may be due in large measure to our unacknowledged longing for spiritual roots and certainties, and our intuition that beauty and truth are indeed related. □

Robert E. Proctor *is a professor of Italian at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut.*

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RELIGION BOOKNOTES

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Romano Guardini:
A Precursor of Vatican II
by Robert A. Krieg, C.S.C.
University of Notre Dame, $18, 270 pp.

When Karl Rahner assumed Romano Guardini's chair at the University of Munich in 1963, he praised the octogenarian writer and thinker as a Christian humanist who had led Germany's Catholics out of an intellectual and cultural ghetto and into the contemporary world. One could hardly quarrel with those words. In a long career, Guardini made singular contributions in liturgy, literary criticism, and the philosophy of religion. From *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1918) to the phenomenally popular *The Lord* (1937), his books were considered classics in their day. Guardini died in 1968 at the age of eighty-three. Curiously, within a few years his writings were practically unread. In the last decade his work has undergone a modest revival. Robert Krieg's study invites us to reconsider in depth the work of a Catholic writer who was one of the most popular and influential in the first half of the twentieth century.

Krieg opens with a biographical chapter and closes with a bibliography of Guardini's works and works about him, as well as a chronology of his life. A series of thematic chapters set out Guardini's thinking on a range of topics. Krieg, better than most, understands that with Guardini we are not dealing with an intellectual system builder. Guardini's books covered Christology, liturgy, spirituality, and ecclesiology. But he also wrote studies of Pascal, Socrates, Rilke, Dostoevsky, and Dante, as well as a steady stream of works on cultural criticism, meditative reflections on the Bible, the Christian life, and the church's sacramental life.

Guardini's early studies were on Bonaventure (on whom he wrote both his dissertation and academic *habilitationschrift*). His keen interest in phenomenology, Kreig notes, gave Guardini's theological orientation a direction not unlike that of Hans Urs von Balthasar (who had been a student of Guardini), John Paul II, and the later Josef Ratzinger (whose dissertation work was also on Bonaventure). Such a theological "tone" owes more to Plato than to Aristotle, is deeply contemplative, and less concerned with historical-critical approaches to Scripture. This strain of theology is more sapiential than intellectual. All of these writers combine a deeply rooted Christian vision with a passionate drive to speak to the contemporary world. All likewise have a deep interest in *belles lettres*.

Guardini spent his entire mature life, after a few years in pastoral work, within a university milieu. He not only lectured and wrote, but he also celebrated the liturgy, worked with youth, served as a confessor and counselor, and enjoyed a vast reputation as a preacher. His chaired positions were never in theology as such. At Berlin, for example, his chair's province was the "Catholic World View." Guardini rejected Nazism, which he viewed as a system of ersatz salvation. After publishing on his anti-Nazi position in 1935, his lectures were monitored by informers. In 1939 he lost his professorship and had his youth center closed. In 1941 he was banned from public speaking. After the war he resumed his active career with such distinction that in 1965, three years before his death, Pope Paul VI wanted to name him to the College of Cardinals, an honor Guardini declined.

Whether there will be a new appreciation of Guardini in the future is hard to predict. Some of his works have begun to reappear (in, for example, the "Ressourcement" series published by Eerdmans). One thing is clear, however. Guardini serves as a model for a kind of Christian thinker we need in every generation—a theologian who has a wide-ranging interest in real issues faced by a culture at a given time. Such a theologian must combine the ancient understanding of speaking of God out of authentic experience with a willingness to speak to an audience larger than that of fellow academics and theologians. Romano Guardini surely did that, as Robert Krieg shows in this extremely interesting and well-researched work.

The Gethsemani Encounter
edited by Donald Mitchell and James Wiseman, O.S.B.
Continuum, $27.50, 320 pp.

At the 1993 Parliament of World Religions, the Dalai Lama suggested a meeting of Buddhist and Christian monastics take place in order to discuss their respective ways of living the monastic life. He more specifically suggested the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky as the site for the meeting because it had been the home of Thomas Mer-

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ton, whom he had met on Merton's fateful journey to the East in 1968. That suggestion found realization in July of 1996. *The Gethsemani Encounter* is a record of those discussions and a collection of the papers read at the conference.

The format of each conference called for reflections on a set theme. For example, in a session on prayer and meditation, there were Buddhist papers on "mindfulness" and Zen sitting and harmony/dialogue/meditation with corresponding Christian papers on the concept of contemplation and on the role of *lectio divina* in the monastic life of the West. The early conferences dealt with large topics such as community, spirituality and society, growth in the life of perfection. Later conferences, which did not use formal papers, focused on specific spiritual topics ranging from mind and virtue to issues of teaching, language, Scripture, practice, experience, discernment, and grace. The final topics section, under the rubric of "Tragedy and Transformation," dealt with suffering, sacrifice, violence, social action, tolerance, women's issues, and unity.

The sessions on topics, since they were not in the form of formal papers, are recorded here in transcripts of actual conversations. For me, these transcriptions were the most interesting part of the volume, since it enabled one party to ask the "What do you mean by...?" question. The other side then would provide analogies or clarifications so that some common ground for discussion might be reached. These encounters encouraged precision and also clarified differences. Is the Christian monastic virtue of humility the same as Buddhist selflessness (and, one could add, is the key to understanding the difference to be found in the concept of "self")? Is the Christian concept of grace alien to Buddhism or is there some link between Christian grace and Buddhist teachings on "blessings"? The exchanges recorded here were done in an irenic spirit and in a brief period of time. Readers might wish to add "Yes, but..." to many of these conversations. But that reaction, I suppose, is exactly what a book devoted to exchange ought to provoke.

The epilogue has two tributes to Thomas Merton, one by the Trappist James Conner who had been a monk at Gethsemani and is now the abbot of the monastery in Ava, Missouri, and the other by the Dalai Lama. Abbot James recalls some words of Merton from the *Asian Journal*. Deep contemplative encounters, Merton wrote, transform communication into communion. Judging from these pages, all who participated lived together during their Gethsemani encounter in an amity which reflects the best of both traditions.

Readers of this journal might like to know that this week of common reflection was not a "one-shot" deal. Such interreligious exchange has been going on now, with the blessing of Rome, for nearly two decades. Buddhist monks can live for extended periods in Christian monastic centers and Christians are able to enjoy hospitality in Buddhist centers as well. That such exchanges between those who "keep the silences" bear much fruit is clear from the reactions of all the participants who were invited by Diana Eck

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of Harvard University, as the conference closed, to share their impressions of the week. David Steindl-Rast said that the word which came to him as he reflected was "gratefulness." Readers of this volume will feel the same.

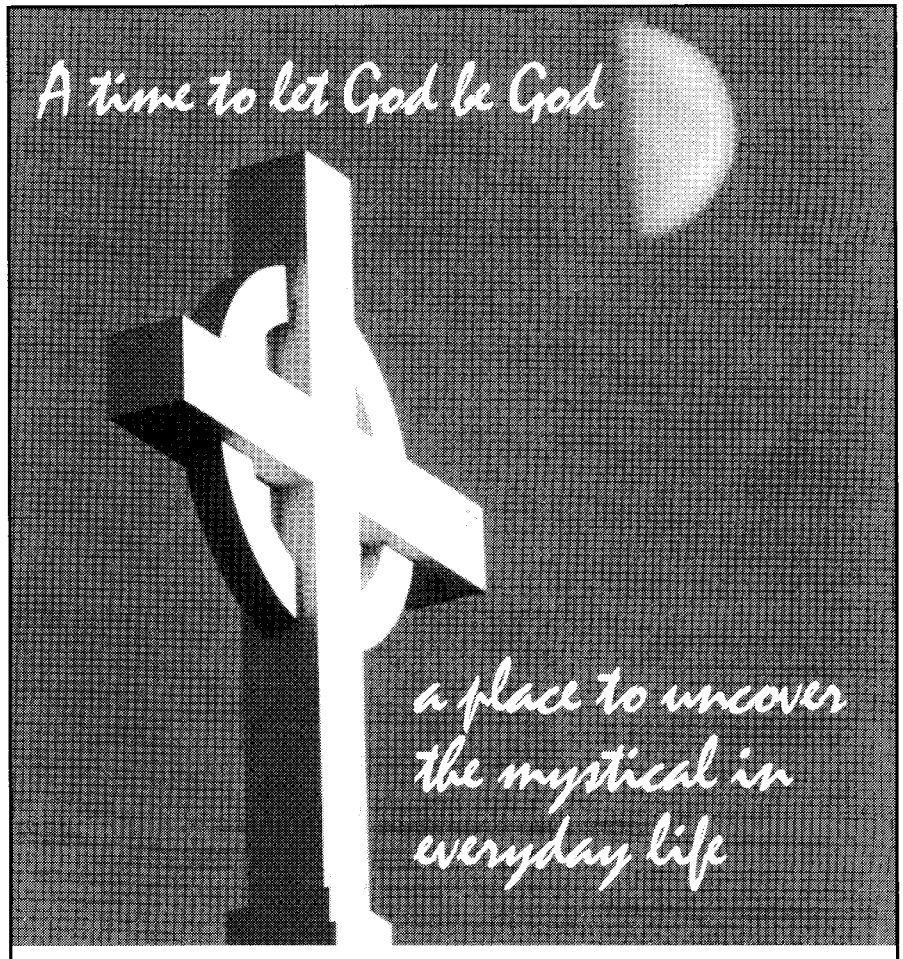
Rosemary Haughton has been one of my favorite theologians. Books like *The Catholic Thing* (1980) and *The Passionate God* (1981) still stand up well after nearly two decades. Haughton's writing combines a number of extremely important strains: a deep respect for the Christian tradition of spirituality, a prophetic sense of social justice, and a close attention to actual experience. For Haughton, that experience encompasses her conversion, her role as a mother of a large family, a life lived in small intentional communities both in Scotland and in this country, and her sense of herself as a Christian feminist.

Rosemary Haughton: Witness to Hope
by Eilish Ryan
Sheed & Ward, $15.95, 221 pp.

Ryan has written a serviceable intellectual biography of Haughton. Like many books born of the dissertation experience, this volume has a first chapter of intellectual throat clearing (in this particular case, a survey of recent thinking on Christian spirituality). The second chapter provides a readable biography covering Haughton's British childhood, her adolescent conversion, subsequent marriage, and years spent in Yorkshire, Scotland, and Massachusetts with a family that included ten children, two "official" and several unofficial foster children. Haughton's current base is at Wellsprings Community in Massachusetts, which provides shelter for battered and homeless women. In the midst of this strenuous existence, she has managed to write thirty books, twelve pamphlets, and enough articles to take up just under twelve pages in this book's bibliography.

Haughton's Catholicism has its deep roots in the matrix of English Catholic renewal associated with the Dominican Spode House and the Distributist Movement in the generation after G. K. Chesterton. Unlike some who come from that background, Haughton has not been subject to any reactionary nostalgic vision of society or the church. She has grown spiritually and culturally over the years, with her more recent writings drawing from the liberationist vision of small Christian communities. Her fundamental conviction is that such communities need to provide the sort of hospitality characteristic of the contemporary Catholic Workers but whose roots are also in the monastic tradition.

Haughton's attractive theology is about how life is actually to be lived: Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality whose holiness needs to be experienced. In an excellent essay on prophetic spirituality, she makes the shrewd comment that ordinary life does not need "to be sanctified" as if it were unholy without such attention. Everyday life is already holy."Working hard over 'material' matters is part of the enterprise," she writes.



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Haughton's writing, in short, is derived from experience in the concrete and not in the abstract. The phrase cited above about "working hard over material matters" has an authentic ring coming from a woman who had to feed and clothe a dozen children and who cared for a husband burdened by various emotional problems. In 1967 she visited Thomas Merton (the monk noted in his journal that he had never met a pregnant theologian before). Haughton learned from Merton that she needed to give voice—"to symbolize and embody" is the way she put it—to whatever it is that we speak of when we talk about spirituality. In that sense, even though she is a prose writer, there is something very poetic—in the very best sense of the word—about her writing. Yet, Haughton has no desire to interiorize her experience completely. She wisely notes that frequent retreats and calls to "wait on God" can often be evasions of social responsibility.

In her bibliography Ryan notes that Haughton had two books published in 1997. I have not seen them yet, but be assured that I will read them eagerly. Haughton represents that excellent tradition of lay theologians who write from a perspective quite different from that of academics. Both styles have their place in the theological tradition. As Bernard Lonergan observed of Haughton's work, we need those who are able to give concrete objectification of their spiritual experience.

Of the famous duo, Sheed and Ward, Maisie Ward (1889–1975), was born into a distinguished English Catholic family. Ward's grandfather, a contemporary of John Henry Newman, was famous for his expressed desire to have an infallible pronouncement from the pope each morning with his *Times*. Her father was a biographer of Cardinal Wiseman. Maisie Ward was, as she said, a third-

The Living of Maisie Ward
by Dana Greene
The University of Notre Dame, $25, 255 pp.

generation member of the Oxford Movement. Denied a university education by her father (who sent his two sons to Oxford but believed women had no need of such an education), she stayed at home, wrote, and gave support to her family as her father worked on his great two-volume biography of Cardinal Newman. Maisie found a vocation of sorts as a member of the Catholic Evidence Guild—outdoor preachers who spoke regularly at Hyde Park Corner (they were still at it when, as a student, I saw Cecily Hastings and Frank Sheed speak sometime in the late 1950s) as apologists for the Catholic faith. Through the guild she met the Australian, Frank Sheed, whom she married in 1926 when she was thirty-eight and he, eight years younger.

Soon after their marriage they began the publishing enterprise that would become Sheed & Ward. Over the next five decades they not only managed the publishing house (with offices on both sides of the Atlantic), but Maisie edited, translated, or wrote over twenty books herself, including five on Chesterton, Newman, and her friend Caryll Houselander.

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She also kept up a strenuous lecture schedule and worked with an organization to provide decent housing for the poor. After the first blush of optimism in the aftermath of Vatican II, there was a general malaise in Catholic publishing. Eventually Frank and Maisie settled in Jersey City, where they lived modestly. The wrenching changes in the aftermath of the council left them somewhat bewildered and hurt.

Catholics of a certain age will read this book with waves of nostalgia and memory washing over them. The life of Maisie Ward overlapped with some of the most significant moments in modern Catholicism. The whole cast of characters is here: Christopher Dawson, C.C. Martindale, Dorothy Day, the Baroness de Hueck, the Abbé Godin (whose *Is France Pagan?* she translated), Sister Madeleva, Martin D'Arcy, Ronald Knox, Hans Küng, Charles Davis, Hubert Van Zeller, Edward Schillebeeckx, Karl Rahner, Caryll Houselander, as well as movements galore: Cana, Christian Family Movement, *Integrity*, Catholic Interracial Council, the Catholic Rural Life Movement, and, preeminently, the Catholic Evidence Guild.

Dana Greene's biography is a loving one. She has obviously done a lot of research and talked with a fair number of Maisie's contemporaries. It is not as witty or as moving as Wilfrid Sheed's memoir of his parents, *Frank and Maisie* (1986), where Frank Sheed gets more fully drawn. But it does add insights and detail about the life of this extraordinary woman. This book, marred by very few errata, fills in a gap in the history of Anglophone Catholicism, and for that reason alone we should receive it with appreciation. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

If she insists on suffering as the hallmark of love, she also insists that we do not pursue pain, and writes that she can find neither blame nor wrath in God. She offers us a real chance to "recover" from the morbidity that eventually sapped the life of the *passio domini* tradition, only to reappear in later Jansenism.

How to read Julian is a question of perspective. Bauerschmidt has chosen to focus on the passion, but readers ought to know that for Julian the central icon of the cross is accompanied by the doctrine of "Mother Jesus," who will never leave her children. Julian reworks this twelfth-century Cistercian teaching to provide a melioristic mercy equally important to her work.

The mercy of the Holy Spirit is for Julian a kind of therapy challenging the blame she knew to be part of church doctrine. Need we pit the therapeutic against the technological today? As we face our own death, there is both a fierce need to continue the work of restoring the creation and a knowledge that we must let go

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of it. Both currents come from God and both reflect the desire for God. The pretechnological Julian saw life as a mixture of weal and woe. Her final choice to opt for mercy is therapeutic for many.

ROBERT ENGLERT
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Dialogue & dissent

Commonweal and Richard McCormick have performed a great service to the church by presenting "The Church and Dissent" [February 27]. I fervently wish that the ideas presented could be brought to the attention of all alert Christians. (In fact, in view of problems being encountered by our fellow believers in the God of Abraham, it seems evident that many Jews and Muslims would also benefit from many of the thoughts expressed in the article.)

For Catholics, Father McCormick's great contribution is to put into perspective the constructive aspect of the emergence of dissent following upon the current widespread discussion of possible new formulations of traditional teaching in the light of current experience.

Rather than deploring the existence of dissent, we should rejoice that much thought is being given by many individuals to important issues. As the article indicates, such dissent should only follow after "prayerful, arduous, reflective, informed" consideration of the questions at issue. My own admittedly limited observation is that loyal dissent found today among many Catholics has followed such consideration.

It also follows from these extensive efforts by Catholics, both dissenters and nondissenters, that there is a substantial opportunity for the Holy Spirit to speak to the church through its many members. As Saint Paul wrote in First Corinthians, "All of us have been given to drink of the one Spirit."

How well the members of the church are listening today will be better judged from the perspective of a hundred years from now than from our present close-up view. Undoubtedly, the Spirit has unlimited power to make understanding of the church available to its members, but the ability of individual imperfect members of the church to receive such understanding is less certain. I am optimistic enough to believe that unprecedented numbers of Catholics are making a sincere effort to receive understanding from the Holy Spirit.

The process of dialogue among church members has characterized the development of formulations of doctrine from the earliest years of the church. Such dialogue has not been limited to participants in church councils or to popes and their advisers. It would be even less reasonable, in the post-Vatican II environment described by Father McCormick, that large numbers of Catholics would not be giving prayerful thought to different views on doctrinal questions. This is particularly true of teachings such as those contained in

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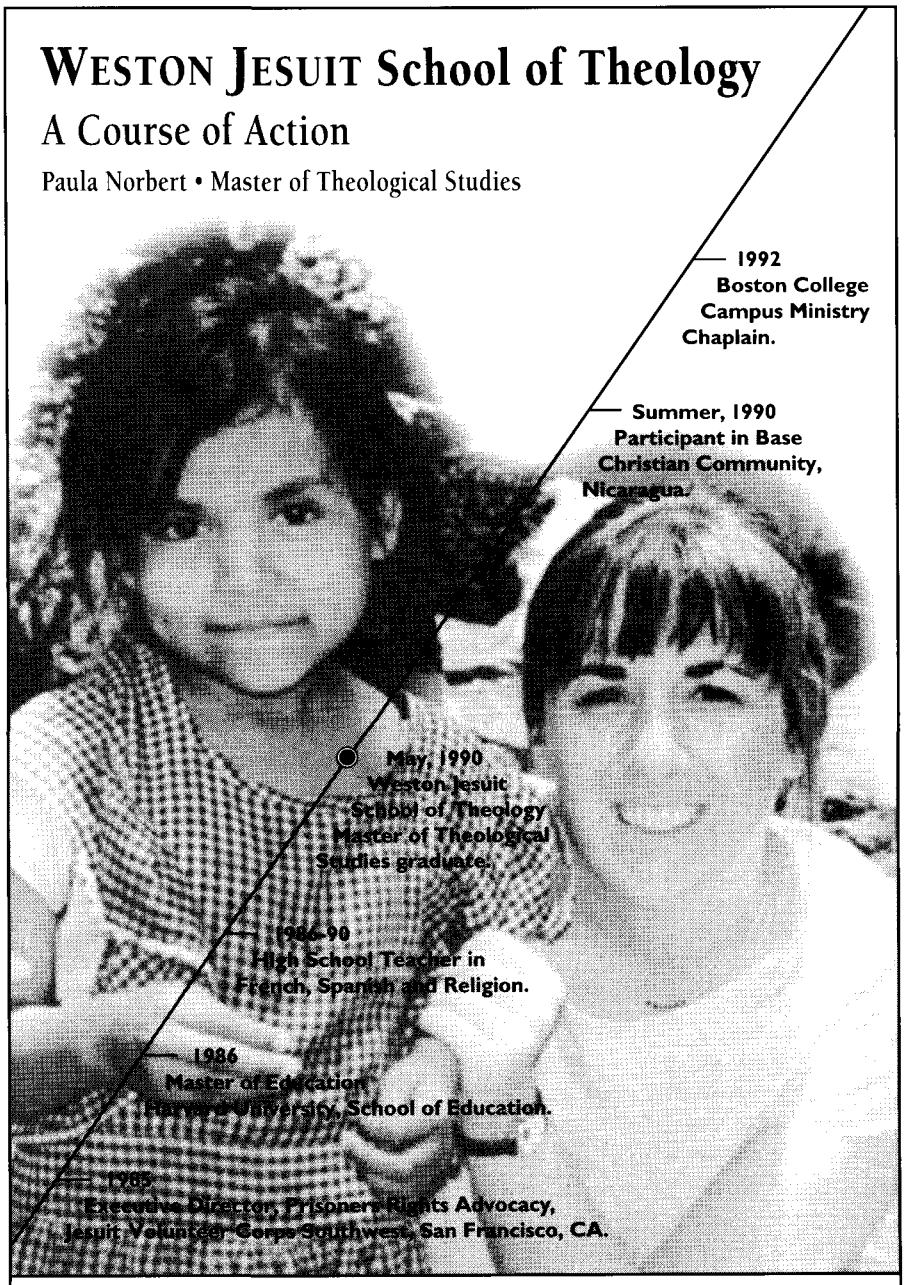

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Humanae vitae, which so directly affect so many people.

A great contribution to the advancement of the kingdom of God could be made by both dissenters and those the dissenters take issue with by keeping uppermost in their minds and hearts the teaching of Christ echoed by Saint Paul in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians concerning love for one another. Unfortunately, history is replete with examples of teachers and dissenters who, in their zeal for asserting their perceptions of truth, have lost sight of Christ's teachings concerning love, from which almost no one dissents.

JAMES R. WORSLEY, JR.
Chevy Chase, Md.

The obligation of dissent

As one baptized in 1926 and trained to love Holy Mother Church in the 1930s, it was not difficult for me to receive the "received wisdom"; it was the way things were done. Then came Hans Küng, John Courtney Murray, Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, and Pope John XXIII. Vatican II was a thrilling revelation. But apart from fiddling with the liturgy, nothing much happened after the council. The mindset of the Vatican was set in stone.

Richard McCormick has made clear that now that Vatican II has brought the church into the modern age, on occasion we all have the obligation of respectful dissent; each of us is responsible for his or her own spiritual life and for the communal life of the church. I am grateful for McCormick's clear, wise, and gentle illumination of where we are at present.

DAVID K. REEVES
Princeton, N.J.

McCormick on dissent

Thanks for Richard McCormick's "The Church & Dissent" [February 27], especially for its references to documents of the Second Vatican Council; they are highly relevant to the discussions we are having today. It still astounds me to hear of the

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wonderful vision of the church that emerged over those few years.

CATHERINE WENTHEN
Syracuse, N.Y.

Part of the family

Thank you for sending us a copy of your issue of March 13, with its Last Word article, "Among the Monks," by Nancy G. Westerfield, describing her and her husband's stays with us here at the Crosier Renewal Center. Naturally, we look forward to Nancy's next visit. Friends become family; she has certainly been part of ours.

I have e-mailed copies of the article to some of our other monasteries and religious communities in this country, to our provincial superior in Saint Paul, and to our master general in Belgium. JAMES G. MOEGLEIN, O.S.C.
Kearney, Neb.

The writer is prior of the Crosier Renewal Center.

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ALIVE, ON TAPE

Mark F. Bernstein

Former President George Bush, in case you missed it, has decided not to write his memoirs. If he persists, he will become the first president since Woodrow Wilson not to write a book after leaving office. If we make allowances for Wilson, who was an invalid when he left the White House (and who had written voluminously before becoming president), and for William Howard Taft, who wrote dozens of judicial opinions as chief justice, Bush could become our least literary ex-president since Chester A. Arthur—for which literature, of course, should be grateful. Presidential memoirs rarely yield any insights, and now that most are ghost-written, such memoirs cannot even claim to open a window on the putative author's soul.

I was put in mind of all this upon reading Michael R. Beschloss's *Taking Charge* (Simon & Schuster, 1997), which contains portions of a much more valuable historical record. It is a compilation of phone conversations secretly taped by Lyndon Johnson in 1963 and 1964, a rare vantage point onto the events and personalities of the time. With the exception of Harry Truman (who starchily refused to do so), every president from Franklin Roosevelt to Richard Nixon recorded at least some of his private conversations. FDR and Dwight Eisenhower seem to have tried it only once or twice. But beginning with Kennedy and ending, of course, with Watergate, the practice became much more extensive.

Beschloss uses recordings through 1964 because those are the only Johnson tapes that have yet been transcribed, although archivists at the LBJ Library say there are literally hundreds of hours of Johnson tapes still in the vaults. Johnson meant to use them in writing his memoirs. But while Johnson later wrote about his struggles with deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the maneuvering to win passage of the Civil Rights Act, the tapes present those battles as they raged, with a nuance unavailable elsewhere. One can readily understand how Nixon could regard his more extensive White House taping system as an improvement rather than an innovation.

In fact, Nixon's own tapes seem to be leaking out everywhere, slivering his reputation with a thousand small cuts. The most recently transcribed portions have been published in a book by Stanley I. Kutler, aptly named *Abuse of Power* (The Free Press, 1997). Better still, one can listen to the tapes themselves at the National Archives Annex in College Park, Maryland. Sitting in a spacious sky-lit library, it is possible to pop a cassette into a machine and hear the attempt to overthrow constitutional government in the United States. While Beschloss's Johnson comes across as a relentless schmoozer—the worst profanity, apparently, was reserved for those he addressed in person—the Nixon we hear is not so much a villain as petty, impotent, and tedious. He goes on and on about his role in the Alger Hiss investigation, and is forever telling aides to reread his self-aggrandizing book, *Six Crises*. Sometimes he erupts with a thunderclap of inarticulate cravenness, as when he berates his advisors for not staging a break-in at the Brookings Institute to loot its safe. "We are going to use any means!" he storms, adding as an almost farcical afterthought, "And have it done in a way that makes somebody else look bad."

Despite the crimes and venality that the Nixon tapes reveal—or perhaps because of them—one is tempted to call them Nixon's greatest contribution to history. For the immediacy and insight they offer, nothing in U.S. history can match them. And they provide useful perspective on current preoccupations, such as campaign finance reform: here is Nixon selling off ambassadorships (a $250,000 campaign contribution was a minimum).

All the recordings, of course, rest on the betrayal of confidences, which dampens our desire for more. Still, as habits of letter-writing and journal-keeping slacken, there is reason to regret the loss of such an unfiltered record of events. Historians have fretted for a decade that in the laptop age, drafts of speeches, dashed-off notes, and the like will be purged from government hard drives and lost to posterity. Hillary Clinton seemed appalled a few years ago when someone suggested she keep a diary, reminding her questioner how quickly it would end up subpoenaed by a congressional investigating committee. Needless to say, so far as we know, none of Nixon's successors has wiretapped the Oval Office.

The crowning irony is that Nixon fought the release of these tapes until the day he died but they will make him the most-studied president of the postwar era, and perhaps the best-understood president in history. And they will also insure that Richard Nixon will never be rehabilitated. No matter what praise will later be written, Nixon will obstruct justice daily, now and forever, on continuous loop. But he will live forever, too. It was quite a Faustian bargain. For history, perhaps, a better one than George Bush could have made with any publisher. □

Mark F. Bernstein *is an attorney and freelance writer who lives in Philadelphia.*

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